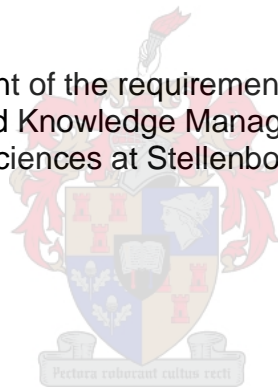


The Concept of Distributed Leadership Practice and its Applicability in the Management of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs)

By

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DECLARATION

By submitting this thesis electronically, I declare that the entirety of the work contained therein is my own, original work, that I am the sole author thereof (save to the extent explicitly otherwise stated), that reproduction and publication thereof by Stellenbosch University will not infringe any third party rights and that I have not previously in its entirety or in part submitted it for obtaining any qualification.

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ABSTRACT

The thesis explored the leadership landscape of a Zambian Small and Medium Enterprise –Prompt Spares Limited. The case study investigated the extent of Distributed Leadership practices in this family-owned organisation that also operates on multiple sites, making it a particular type of Small and Medium Enterprise. The nature of the Small and Medium Enterprise was reviewed with focus on leadership aspects being stipulated as relational processes that take place inside the range of a team.

Small and Medium Enterprises are perceived to be more effective if their entrepreneurial undertakings are done by small teams as opposed to by individuals. The self-organization of Small and Medium Enterprises provides an alternate organizational structure to which, Distributed Leadership as an emergent form of leadership can be applied. Leadership is a term used to describe individuals with a dominating effect on their followers. Distributed Leadership theory offers an alternative kind of leadership where the realm of leadership is not in an individuals' sphere but shared amongst different individuals in an organization. It is a form of leadership characterized by collective efforts and contributions from every individual in the organization provided it is towards meeting organizational goals.

The main objective of the case study was to explore the manifestation of Distributed Leadership practice in Small and Medium Enterprises with a particular organisation as its case in reference. The case study was conducted with a qualitative research frame through which data was collected using purposive sampling to select participants for inclusion in the study. Interviews with the owners and focus groups conducted among managers, as well researcher's observations were reported as narrative.

The interviews and observations indicate that this particular organisation does display some traits of Distributed Leadership, except when it comes to financial control. However, even though the organisation is relatively small and the owner-managers are related, the leadership landscape is of a hybrid configuration with both distributed and vertical forms of leadership. This conforms to other research about leadership in other Small and Medium Enterprises.

The study concludes with a summary of the case study and recommendations for prospects of future research on Distributed Leadership in Small and Medium Enterprises.

OPSOMMING

Die tesis ondersoek die leierskapslandskap van 'n Zambiese klein en medium onderneming, naamlik Prompt Spares Beperk. Die gevallestudie het die omvang van verspreide leierskapspraktyke ondersoek in hierdie spesifieke klein en medium onderneming, want dit is in familie-besit en opereer ook op meer as een perseel. Die aard van die klein en medium onderneming is van nader beskou met die fokus op die leierskap-aspekte gesien as verhoudings prosesse in die bestek van spanwerk.

Klein en medium ondernemings word beskou as meer effektief as hulle entrepreneuriese aktiwiteite in klein spanne onderneem word eerder as deur individue. Die self-organisasie van klein en medium ondernemings bied 'n alternatiewe organisasie struktuur waar verspreide leierskap kan ontvou. Leierskap is 'n term wat individue se oorheersende uitwerking op volgelinge beskryf. Verspreide leierskapsteorie bied 'n alternatiewe soort leierskapskonsepsie waar die kader van leierskap nie beperk is tot individue nie, maar gedeel word tussen verskeie persone. Dit is 'n vorm van leierskap wat gekenmerk word deur kollektiewe pogings met bydraes van elke lid van die organisasie gemik om die doelwitte van die organisasie te bereik.

Die hoofdoel van die gevallestudie was om die manifestasie van verspreide leierskapspraktyke in 'n bepaalde klein en medium onderneming te beskryf. Die gevallestudie is uitgevoer met 'n kwalitatiewe navorsingsraamwerk waarmee data ingesamel is met behulp van doelgerigte steekproef om deelnemers te kies. Die onderhoude met eienaars, fokusgroep deelname deur bestuurders, en observasies is in narratiewe vorm gerapporteer.

Die onderhoude, fokusgroepe en observasies dui aan dat die spesifieke onderneming wel eienskappe van verspreide leierskap vertoon, behalwe in die area van finansiële bestuur. Al is die organisasie relatief klein en die eenaar-bestuurders verwant, is die leierskapslandskap eerder hibried van aard met beide verspreide en vertikale vorme van leierskap. Dit stem ooreen met ander navorsing oor leierskap in klein en medium ondernemings.

Die tesis sluit af met 'n opsomming van die gevallestudie en aanbevelings vir toekomstige navorsing wat verspreie leierskap in klein en medium ondernemings betref.

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this thesis to:

My beloved daughters Esnart Leya Theo and Mpande Elizabeth Theo may this be your inspiration to achieve more than I have and may it also be a testimony to you that you can achieve anything you put your mind to.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

DL	Distributed Leadership
GCE	General Certificate of Education
GRZ	Government of the Republic of Zambia
IATA	International Air Transport Association
PRSP	Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper
PSL	Prompt Spares Limited
SME	Small and Medium Enterprise
ZEMA	Zambia Environmental Management Agency

CHAPTER ONE:

INTRODUCTION

Business ventures cannot be undertaken without the guidance of leadership and management, since the organizational mission and goals are determined by those in charge and in addition they are responsible for practices to motivate their employees (Ensley, Pearce and Hmieleski, 2006). The traditional theorization of management leadership sees leadership configured around an individual and gravitates towards relations based on a strict leader and follower distinction (Cope, Kempster and Parry, 2011). However, leadership theory is no longer exclusively anchored in theorization centered on clearly identifiable figureheads, but also now pays attention to the leadership roles of subordinates, organizational work settings and cultures; including consideration of how organizational members position themselves in the arrangement of activity in their respective organizations (Avolio, Walumbwa and Weber, 2009).

Distributed Leadership (DL), the chosen form of leadership that is the focus of this thesis, brings to the fore a form of leadership not located at the top of a hierarchy and embodied in a single individual, but instead marks a shift from leading by way of authoritarian modes to leading in more diffused and democratic modes (Woods *et al.*, 2004). This thesis explores the concept of distributed leadership practice and its applicability in the management of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs), taking a Zambian SME—Prompt Spares Limited (PSL) as the context for an in-depth case study. The introductory chapter provides an overview and rationale for the case study by highlighting those aspects that are grounds for the focus on the concept of distributed leadership in informal organizations found in the entrepreneurial context. There is increasing interest in leadership research focused on informal organizational setups and this has given rise to increased diversity in the realm of leadership theory (Cogliser and Brigham, 2004). The thesis focuses on how the conceptualizations of distributed leadership theory have impact on the managerial component of leadership practice in a particular SME. Typically, in an SME, and especially in family businesses, it is to be expected that leadership roles will reside in the owner-manager. The case study is of such a family-owned organization that attempts a more diffused approach to leadership.

The thesis considers the background of the pertinence of distributed leadership practice in organizations to demonstrate why its practice in the context of informal organizations

such as the SME in the Zambian business environment taken as a case study requires exploration. This will set the scene for the aims and objectives of the case study, followed by an overview of the theoretical framework regarding distributed leadership that will guide the data collection in the case study, and the analysis and interpretation of that data. The chapter ends with a chapter outline.

DISTRIBUTED LEADERSHIP PRACTICES IN SMALL AND MEDIUM ENTERPRISES

The essence of the concept of distributed leadership proposes that leadership in organizations lies in the possession of organizational teams rather than being a property of an individual (Woods *et al.*, 2004). Views of leadership as a managerial function that can be undertaken by any organizational members, even if they are not at the top of the hierarchy, have been put forward by castigators of the traditional individual-centric perspectives of leadership (Lakomski, 2005). When investigating whether the leadership of organizations put them at a competitive advantage it may be discovered that the formation of teams facilitating the redistribution of in-house organizational roles (Woods *et al.*, 2004) is far more decisive than the individual leadership function. In practice the development of distributed leadership in an SME would be the initial responsibility of the owner-manager who would be required to enlist more input of employees in decision making to facilitate the institutionalization of collaborative practices (Cope, Kempster and Parry, 2011). However, the distinctive aspects of SME contexts render conceptualization of such leadership activity unlikely given the smaller organization size, yet perhaps likely given the lack of formalized organizational roles—these factors might be inverted in the case of large formal organizations (Leitch, McMullan and Harrison, 2009). Whatever the case may be, the leadership activity in SMEs is usually assumed to be connected to an individual, thereby creating a dominating image of a heroic leader in the SME context (Ensley, Pearce and Hmieleski, 2006).

The case under consideration draws attention to a form of leadership that embraces collective efforts and welcomes the contributions from all individuals in the organization toward meeting organizational goals, in other words distributed leadership. The reason why distributed leadership is regarded as noteworthy compared to other conceptions of leadership is due to its unique depiction of leadership as the outcome of collaborative efforts which heightens the fact that it emerges as a property of an organizational team

(Woods *et al.*, 2004). Considering that distributed leadership is an emergent form of leadership, the results from this case study will give more insight into whether the interpersonal relations denoting the leadership characteristics of the SME reveals some dimensions of distributed leadership or not. The mandate of an SME is usually an entrepreneurial one and in most cases they are owner managed (Darling, Gabrielsson and Seristö, 2007). The owner-manager is usually the founder-entrepreneur of the SME and they have a weighty entitlement to performing any actions owing to the fact that they own and control the enterprise (Cope, Kempster and Parry, 2011). As already alluded to, the discriminate role and influence of the owner-manager in the SME is a cardinal component of the SME context (Smith, 2007). The natural inclination of owner-managers is to retain control of all business activity in an effort to protect what they believe they own, which in turn hinders their ability to adopt distributed leadership practices (Perren and Grant, 2001).

Writers advocating distributed leadership offer it as a leadership alternative with the auspicious outlook that it may be a panacea to handling the challenges of the new forms of organizational arrangements (Fitzsimons, James and Denyer, 2011). In coping with the frequent changes in their operational environments, organizations had to flatten their structures and their intertwined network positions in an effort to overcome the inefficiencies of top-down systems where the apex individuals are considered to be the leaders of an organizational unit (Thorpe, Gold and Lawler, 2011). The current global transformations that brought about the global economic crisis caused a rise in levels of social exclusion and high levels of unemployment which in turn placed SMEs in a position to make a meaningful impact in national economies (Avolio, Walumbwa and Weber, 2009). Factors of complexity and ambiguity in the global economies combined with the requirement of quick response to market changes brought about an increase in organizational work configurations based on inter relations thereby causing alterations in division of labour amongst organizational members (Gronn, 2002).

For SMEs, these factors of ambiguity and complexity in the global business environments are accompanied with other factors such as new technological innovations and the increase in domestic deregulation, which adds to the multitudes of challenges they need to overcome (Avolio, Walumbwa and Weber, 2009). For instance, the Zambian government has taken a multi-sectoral approach in promoting growth in the private sector to boost national development in the face of the negative effects that global trends had on

the Zambian economy (GRZ Ministry of Commerce Trade and Industry, 2007). According to the Zambian Government's Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) 2007, one aspect of this multi-sectoral approach for promoting national development, concern the SME sector as crucial for economic recovery and the reduction of poverty through the creation of employment opportunities (Zahra and Wright, 2016). The Zambian Government acknowledges the valuable contribution that SMEs make in reduction of poverty through job creation for citizens (GRZ Ministry of Commerce Trade and Industry, 2007).

As SMEs mature from being startups and evolve into established enterprises it becomes necessary to move from the leader-follower approach to more distributive modes of leadership within an entrepreneurial team (Cope, Kempster and Parry, 2011). The recognition of team attributes by the leader enables them to guide collaborative activity and to foster team spirit that helps the team handle the SME environment (Mehra *et al.*, 2006). Such recognition of the importance of an entrepreneurial team by the owner-manager becomes necessary as much of the successful entrepreneurial activity is characterized by multiple players and not a single player (Gartner *et al.*, 1994). However, transformations of an SME operating under an entrepreneurial team has serious implications for the owner-manager as it requires of them a loosening of the grip they have on their business as the notion of distributed leadership in entrepreneurial teams is something unfamiliar to them (Cope, Kempster and Parry, 2011).

This is not the case for business undertakings that are created by an entrepreneurial team that take time to cultivate distributed leadership practice in their enterprise from the onset (Ensley, Pearson and Amason, 2002). Ideally, businesses that have been set up as entrepreneurial team ventures will not be affected by a leadership crisis as their set up is indicative of distributed leadership (Jones and Crompton, 2009). This underscores that the favorable outcomes of business ventures undertaken by entrepreneurial teams provides a suitable basis for SMEs in the process of expanding their business to consider distributed leadership practices to avert a potential crisis of leadership (Kempster, Cope and Parry, 2010). However, this required of owner-managers to change their approach of controlling all leadership activity and to delegate some leadership activity to other employees as the demands on their growing organization increase with the expansion of business activity (Cope, Kempster and Parry, 2011). The vertical form of leadership may work well for an SME in its initial phases with the owner-manager as leader directing and

guiding all employees towards realizing their inception vision for their enterprise (Ensley, Pearce and Hmieleski, 2006). It is however likely that the owner-manager may have no latent knowledge of the benefits of distributed leadership practices in promoting efficiency in their enterprises especially not at the startup phase of the SME (Cope, Kempster and Parry, 2011).

To study it properly, leadership must be regarded as distinguishable from the various organizational factors and processes that are examinable (Thorpe, Gold and Lawler, 2011). Unfortunately, there appears to be no general consensus on what leadership is, notwithstanding many years of quantitative and qualitative research about the phenomenon of leadership, but the general agreement is that it is an important phenomenon and that it takes place in situational contexts (Leitch, McMullan and Harrison, 2009) and therefore may take various forms. Conceptions of leadership in the SME context in particular are typified by the perception of it being heroic and centered on an individual (Cope, Kempster and Parry, 2011). Leadership views that have been prototypically conceptualized as focused on an individual as leader are related to various implicit theories of leadership, whilst the view of all organizational individuals being involved in decision making represent a varied form of contextualized leadership (Kempster and Cope, 2010).

This thesis identifies features of distributed leadership in an indigenous Zambian SME, Prompt Spares Limited (PSL) that has been in existence since 2007 and its main business is the supply of spare parts for heavy duty vehicles that service the operations of mining activity in the Zambian copper mining sector. This organization is a family business with three brothers as managers, it has a geographic presence in two Zambian towns and a staff of seven. According to Jones and Crompton (2009) SMEs with staffing levels of not more than 50 employees are under the direct influence of the owner-manager as the traits of organizations of this small size generally revolve around the owner-manager's reasoning. The Zambian Ministry of Trade and Commerce (2007) defines an SME as an organization having; a small number of employees and an investment value of up to K600, 000. It seems therefore that PSL will be a good site to learn about the nature of leadership in an SME setting.

JUSTIFICATION OF THE STUDY

The focal domain of distributed leadership research is the education sector. According to Thorpe, Gold and Lawler (2011:12) “of particular note is the way distributed leadership is shown to have attracted a rapid growth in interest since 2000, but research on the topic has largely remained restricted to the field of school education and of proportionally more interest to UK than US-based academics.” Authors such as Cope (2003), Kempster and Cope (2010), Cope, Kempster and Parry (2011), and Thorpe, Gold and Lawler (2011) made noteworthy contributions to the distributed leadership literature, even covering some aspects of distributed leadership in SMEs. According to Lakomski (2005), leadership is a matter that must be critically examined, despite the fact that researchers are presumptuous about its existence. Albeit the abundance of leadership research being undertaken, there is little known about the leadership practice modes that can translate to organizational effectiveness and this may be due to the engrossment with the classification of leadership styles and determination of individual leader’s traits that are characteristic of traditional leadership research (Harris *et al.*, 2007).

This thesis provides an African SME perspective on distributed leadership. Given the multifaceted roles of an entrepreneur in the SME environment, it is important to determine whether there are any dimensions of distributed leadership in the case organization. Cope (2003) highlights that the entrepreneur is more than just a leader or manager, since they are required to perform different tasks concurrently, for instance marketing, sales representation, public relations, and financial control. A proponent of distributed leadership, Lakomski (2005), draws attention to the fact that differentiation, segmentation and increased use of technology are features of today’s division of labour in organizations and that these can be better analyzed using a distributed practice approach.

Despite the variations in conceptions of distributed leadership, there are points of agreement that leadership is not restricted to a top-down procedural flow from a designated leader to organizational members, or to the existence of only one leader leading a group of organizational members (Mehra *et al.*, 2006).

Distributed leadership provides a more suitable theory of leadership for understanding team activity than the traditional individual-centric theories of leadership (Leitch, McMullan and Harrison, 2009). The manifestation of distributed leadership in an SME

entails a challenge for both the owner-manager and the employees as both have to overcome the traditional inclination of the leader-led kind of leadership practice in order to adopt distributive modes of leadership activity (Cope, Kempster and Parry, 2011).

Gronn (2002) proposes the adoption of distributed leadership practice in organizations and highlights how modern organizations demand various forms of interaction and interrelations between employees which translate into distributed work activity with lots of iteration and parallel decision making. It is foreseeable that there may be some antagonism between the manifestations of distributed leadership in SMEs owing to the situational context of owner-managers who are reluctant to allow for open participation from their employees, a situation which is not conducive for organizational learning or distributed leadership practice (Leitch, McMullan and Harrison, 2009).

RESEARCH OBJECTIVE

The general objective of the thesis is to explore the manifestation of distributed leadership practice in a case study of an SME.

The specific objectives are as follows:

- To identify which notions of distributed leadership actually occur in the leadership landscape of the case organization.
- To bring forth dimensions of distributed leadership that may manifest in the Zambian SME context.
- To offer a perspective to implications of the dimensions of distributed leadership on leadership activity in SMEs.

CASE STUDY RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This thesis addresses distributed leadership in the SME context by way of a specific case study of a small Zambian family owned business, namely Prompt Spares Ltd. The kind of distributed leadership emphasized here is leadership that is not limited to the control of one person but is situated in organizational process that many organizational members are involved in as they try and meet organizational goals (Kempster and Cope, 2010). The premise of the focus of distributed leadership practice is that it is anchored in an endeavour to call on employees with the required skills when they are needed, rather than relying on formalized leadership responsibilities (Harris, 2004). Distributed leadership implementation would require the formal practice of managing, but as it is apparent that

SMEs often have owner-managers who engage in informal management and leadership practice indicative of the heroic figurehead leader (Kempster and Cope, 2010). However, as the SME grows the owner-manager being relied on as the only person to direct leadership activity becomes unrealistic (Ensley, Pearson and Amason, 2002). The growth of an SME is commensurate with a requirement for more employees to participate in leadership activity to allow for effective operational and strategic actions hereby justifying the case for adoption of distributed leadership by SMEs (Jones and Crompton, 2009). Leadership cannot be regarded as an activity that owner-managers in SMEs will consider as being a part of their routine tasks, an issue that is highlighted as one of the factors that restrict learning of effective leadership practices in SME environments (Cope, Kempster and Parry, 2011). The collaborative leadership practices that established SMEs require resonate with the views that the sanctioned leadership activity of numerous leaders executed collaboratively is an emergent property of a structure that has been socially configured (Smith, 2007). Modern organizational characteristics are indicative of forms of knowledge apportioned amongst the different employees in the organization thereby justifying the need for collaborative practices of leadership (Thorpe, Gold and Lawler, 2011). Adoption of more distribution of leadership activity in an SME would entail the owner-manager's recognition of the mere fact that employees in the enterprise hold different forms of knowledge and expertise, necessitating team efforts and the promotion of some autonomy amongst employees (Perren and Grant, 2001). However, the challenge to be overcome is that of an SME leader transforming from the heroic kind of leader who gets everything done on their own to one who embraces distributive modes of leadership practice and executes tasks through team work (Kempster, Cope and Parry, 2010). Various calls for altered views of leadership as distributive and not individualistic note that distributed leadership may have many diverse connotations (Thorpe, Gold and Lawler, 2011).

The thesis aims to explore aspects of distributed leadership in SMEs through the observation of the notion of leadership in the interaction between the owner managers and their employees in the SME understudy. Attention has been drawn to the idea that leadership in today's organizations is now characterised by collective undertakings that are meant to meet a common goal (Thorpe, Gold and Lawler, 2011). The premise of distributed leadership practice is that organizational undertakings tap into expertise from whichever employee may be holding it regardless of their organizational role or position

(Harris and Lambert, 2003). It is pertinent to know how the theory of distributed leadership actually appears in reality when it manifests itself in informal organizations such as SMEs. The locus of the entrepreneurial activity will not be centred on the owner-manager but the entrepreneurial team (Gartner *et al.*, 1994). Based on Cooney (2005), whose argument is that entrepreneurial undertakings succeed when driven by team effort and is undeterred by the romanticized ideas of the owner-manager being the only one behind the success of a successful enterprise. Activity in the SMEs where employees are involved in organizational activities and not just the owner-manager handling all major organizational activity on their own is a depiction of distributed leadership practice (Kempster, Cope and Parry, 2010). The frame of reference for distributed leadership pays particular attention to the interrelations between the dispersed processes in an organization and in the confines of this framework a specific unit can be examined to determine the cognitive arrays that exist (Harris, 2006).

The study addresses the following research questions:

- How do notions of distributed leadership actually manifest in the leadership landscape of the case organization?
- Which dimensions of distributed leadership manifest in the Zambian SME context?
- How might these emergent dimensions of distributed leadership impact the leadership landscape of the SME?

PURPOSE OF THE CASE STUDY

Since the year 2000, ideas behind distributed leadership sparked a lot of interest (Thorpe, Gold and Lawler, 2011), to a point where it has been alluded to as a theory whose hour has arrived (Gronn, 2002). Distributed leadership is an emergent property of an intricate organizational system (Lakomski, 2005). The ideology behind distributed leadership that distinguishes it from other notions of leadership is that it is a product of collaborative actions with an emphasis on its being an emergent property of the team working together (Bennett and Harvey, 2003). Despite the fact that the varying forms of distributed leadership are focused on the educational sector, the phenomenon can still be observed in other domains (Leithwood and Jantzi, 2006). Further to this, distinct forms of distributed leadership have been highlighted which portray varying attributes and contextualisation such as : diverse structures, work ethics and organisational values (Bennett and Harvey,

2003). This particular case study will provide a contextual analysis of the notion of distributed leadership in SMEs and provide possible avenues of exploration in future research.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Any reference to distributed leadership indicates an emphasis on an aspect of leader-follower relations that do not limit leadership action to specific people but is open to collectively performed organizational tasks (Lakomski, 2005). The theoretical frame of distributed leadership that this thesis uses for its analysis of the case are from (Spillane, 2005) (Gronn, 2002, 2008). These authors have different, but complimentary theoretical orientations to distributed leadership. Gronn (2002) proposes a perspective on distributed leadership focused on three modes of action that are performed collaboratively; each aimed at different levels of organizational structure: spontaneous collaboration, intuitive working relations, and institutionalized practices—his theoretical orientation to distributed leadership is informed by activity theory. The activity theory is anchored on perspectives that provide the comprehension of human actions that give the basis for theory in the conceptualisation of the concept of distributed leadership (Spillane, Halverson and Diamond, 2004). Whilst Spillane (2005) draws on the related perspective of distributed cognition; the argument put forward is that distributed leadership practice has human cognition at play in the interactive arena created between leaders, followers and situational contexts in the organization. These authors attribute the conceptual foundation of their perspectives on distributed leadership to distributed cognition and activity theory which have both aided in the comprehension of human interactions in complex settings.

These views are simply indicative of how modern organizational practice that require employees to depend on each other have culminated in necessitated distribution of work activity (Gronn, 2008). Bennett and Harvey (2003) subsequently deduce that the concept of distributed leadership borders around assertions that it is a kind of leadership that firstly an energetic outcome of pooled skills and expertise in collaborative working team; secondly the recognition of all individuals in the organization being equal contributors to organizational functions creates an openness in organizational boundaries and thirdly reinforcing the view that different skills, expert knowledge are spread out amongst all employees and not just the positioned leaders. Whilst Lakomski (2005) depicts an

organization in the context of distributed leadership as a focus on aspects covering it as an entity and the processes that actually form its make-up but recognizing that its leaders just like everyone else are part of the cultural-organizational context; an organizational feature which cannot be influenced by hierarchical positions. The cultural-organizational context involves the social and cultural norms of the organization which have an impact on the distributed leadership practice of the organization (Bennett and Harvey, 2003), as the manner in which employees think and act (distributed cognition) is determined by the social and cultural norms prevailing in the organizations (Harris, 2009).

Distributed leadership presents a means of uncovering intricate details of leadership practice using a different lens thereby identifying possible ways to transform organizations through identified leadership practice modes (Harris and Spillane, 2006). Normative views of distributed leadership draw our attention to how leadership is distributed in organizations and what dimensions the distributed form of leadership may take (Harris, 2006). The theory enforced by the contributions for normative distributed leadership by Thorpe, Gold and Lawler (2011) additionally forms part of the theoretical framework for this case study. The authors propose a quadrant for closer examination of how distributed leadership can be said to be effective in organizational contexts. The normative angle of examining distributed leadership will facilitate the envisaging of determining whether or not the distributed leadership forms identified, enable effective leadership practice (Harris, 2006). Selective formations of distributed leadership have the potential to influence productivity in organizations positively (Leithwood *et al.*, 2008).

Research on distributed leadership practice reviews the link between the macro organizational functions and the micro undertakings of leaders in organizations (Spillane and Sherer, 2004). Leadership analysis is no longer limited to one view of individual actions but also calls for analysis of how it transpires where interrelations between employees and organizational structures make up the social cultural context of an organization (Dinh *et al.*, 2014). Analyzing distributed leadership involves viewing the daily undertakings in an organization by observing the social and dispersed distribution of leadership functions (Gronn, 2002). The meticulous formulations of leadership tasks that distributed leadership dimensions suggest for organizations may lure them to adopt a distributed leadership mode that suits their organizational needs (Woods and Gronn, 2009).

Cope, Kempster and Parry (2011) observe that, growing SMEs that have individuals as the leaders in their enterprises have a “leadership crisis” that arises out of a failure to delegate tasks by owner managers. Even though it may seem as though informal managerial techniques of leadership are effective for managing an emerging enterprise, there actually is a growing need for recognizing formal management techniques that may call for delegating leadership tasks (Perren and Grant, 2001). Execution of distributed leadership compels comprehension of the requirement of skilled competence in employees to be recognized as being relevant for enhanced relationships that arises through the learning that comes out of established empowerment of skilled employees to perform leadership tasks (Heikka, Waniganayake and Hujala, 2013). Distributed leadership can be considered as a remedy for the owner manager’s inability to delegate tasks to their employees, as it enables the enterprises to be viewed as technical rational systems with visible formal structures and a propensity towards goal attainment (Kempster, Cope and Parry, 2010).

Most of the scholarly work on distributed leadership comes from the area of educational management and are aimed at improvements in the management of schools. This might have to do with activity theory's standing in educational psychology. However, inasmuch as schools are organisations, there is no intrinsic reason why this analysis cannot be transferred to the management of small and medium sized business organisations.

OVERVIEW OF CHAPTERS

Chapter Two exposes the theoretical framework that underpinned this case study, namely, Distributed Leadership Theory. Several authors have been cited to provide an overview of the derived meaning of distributed leadership in organizational leadership studies. The literature reviewed is predominantly of international academic literature, in the field of organizational leadership, with a focus on distributed leadership functionality for organizations. The review adopted a thematic approach to discuss the issues associated with the possibility of manifestation of distributed leadership in an informal organization like a typical SME, i.e. the dimensions of distributed leadership; the prominence of the distributed leadership concept; the contextualization of distributed leadership within an SME environment; and anticipated challenges of distributed leadership application in such an environment.

Chapter Three is a focus on the chosen research design and methodology of this study. The qualitative research method employed for this study examined the distributed leadership issues in an SME context in Zambia using in-depth, semi-structured interviews to investigate the distributed leadership phenomenon through responses of the case organisation's owner-managers based on their leadership practices, focus group discussion amongst selected employees, and lastly notes from the researcher's observations whilst visiting the organisation.

Chapter Four presents and analyses the collected interview and observation data. The responses are categorised according to themes and sub-themes that align with the research questions and the theory.

Chapter Five discusses elements of the case study and gives interpretations of the findings.

Chapter Six brings the case study to an end by providing a summary of the study and giving recommendations for further research on distributed leadership and SMEs.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

“The commitment and energy of the founding entrepreneur shaping and controlling resources, which reflect the success ingredients of survival, become the nemesis to growth. A dilemma emerges. There is a necessity to change the approach to leading, to change the nature of the leader-follower relationship” (Cope, Kempster and Parry, 2011, p. 271).

INTRODUCTION

This literature review gives a synopsis of the explicit conceptualizations of distributed leadership practice that are likely to be applicable to the context of an SME in the informal sector of a developing country economy. The focus of this literature review is on illustrating the perceived benefits of distributing organizational leadership and exploring the extent to which dimensions of distributed leadership can be identified in SMEs and whether they are actual mechanisms for organizational efficiency. The perspectives of the discussion of entrepreneurship in SMEs in relation to distributed leadership practice will be given with a view of distributed leadership application and its pertinence to organizations striving to be part of the global economy. The entrepreneur will be regarded in the context of an owner-manager with complete ownership of their small business.

Ongoing views in literature on distributed leadership and SMEs are reviewed with focus on leadership where distributed leadership of SME aspects are stipulated as relational processes that take place inside the range of a team (Thorpe, Gold and Lawler, 2011). “Distributed leadership highlights leadership as an emergent property of a group or network of interacting individuals. This contrasts with leadership as a phenomenon which arises from the individual” (Woods *et al.*, 2004, p. 441). The attention paid to inclinations of distributed leadership is far-reaching even though explications of the concept itself are diverse (Harris and Spillane, 2006). As a consequence, the different sources of literature on distributed leadership that were utilized for this literature review provide insight to the multi-dimensional views that the various authors on distributed leadership bring out, with an aim to highlight an antecedent outcome of distributed leadership practice—the enabling of dispersed tasks which evokes new organizational structures representing core organizational business (Heikka, Waniganayake and Hujala, 2013).

A driving force of the non-conformist conventional view of leadership in distributed leadership theory is that it takes into consideration evolving needs of organizational establishments within modern organizations that arise due to ambiguity and tensions due to rapid sector changes which call for the adoption of flatter structures and use of networks highlighting the inhibitions of top down structures to cope with these changes (Thorpe, Gold and Lawler, 2011). Such kind of leadership is representative of workplace scenarios when different employees rise to the occasion of leading a team on a particular task at a given time hereby reinforcing views of leadership practice being distributed (Lakomski, 2005), and has its location in the unleashed human capabilities of an employee (Harris, 2004).

Distributed models of leadership are a cardinal component in the effective management of an SME's leadership (Jones and Crompton, 2009). Ensley et al (2006) allude to an entrepreneur as being a perfect example of a leader, whose specific domain of activity presents greater potential for research than the orthodox form of organizations. Studies on entrepreneurship render the entrepreneur as an individual with a vital role in the enterprise's transactions, a purpose why the studies accentuate them (Cogliser and Brigham, 2004). Archetypically the impressions of leadership in an SME environment are mundanely viewed as being individualistic or heroic in nature (Kempster, Cope and Parry, 2010). With specific regard to leadership in SMEs Cooney (2005) dismisses the romantic notion of leadership which depicts an entrepreneur in their enterprise as being the sole champions as actualities of successful enterprises reveal that they were built as a result of an entrepreneur building a team and, in some instances, also being part of the team. It suggests that an inquiry into which form of leadership will suit an SME best would be inclined towards distributed leadership, as assertions of how distributed activity undertaken by a team in lieu of a particular person result in immense productivity can be substantiated through an evidence base (Kempster, Cope and Parry, 2010).

Cope, Kempster and Parry (2011) advance the descriptive views of distributed leadership given by Gronn stating that it goes beyond the structured influence of several actors but is more inherent in three forms of concerted actions that result in; spontaneous collaboration, intuitive working relations and practices, a manifestation of which in an SME would be the responsibility of the owner-manager to implement through supportive engagement of their employees in decision making processes and in order to render them into institutionalized practices. The argument being advanced here is to emphasize the

importance of team collaborations that tap into the collective pool of knowledge they form as a source of favorable outcomes for SMES and not the glorified individual role of the owner-manager (Jones and Crompton, 2009). The contention of arguments against individual heroic leadership is based on the surmise that, leadership techniques that are centered on an individual's traits overlook the social composition of leadership and the collaborative modes of organizational groups that are ignited in the leadership process which diminishes individual assumption of roles (Western, 2013). "The tension between acknowledging leadership as (distributed) task performance, and wanting to maintain leadership as a causal explanatory concept, ultimately cannot be sustained" (Lakomski, 2005, p. 59).

DERIVED VIEWS ON DISTRIBUTED LEADERSHIP

It is worth mentioning that the embryonic conceptions of distributed leadership are characterized by diverse illustrations (Kempster, Cope and Parry, 2010) with several authors setting out their arguments on the concept of distributed leadership resulting in substantial advances into ranges of its theory and practice (Bolden, 2011). Arguments advanced by the authors endorsing distributed leadership are based on "the idea that leadership is something many people may be able to exercise..." (Lakomski, 2005, p. 63). The growing discontentment with the two presumed inviolable dualisms defining conventional leadership relationships depicted by leaders and their followers depictions of the nature of this leadership arises as a common hypothesis amongst proponents for distributed leadership (Gronn, 2002). Invariably, authors who are advocates of distributed leadership take one position of contending that distributed leadership cannot be equated to segmenting work duties among organizational members who have specific assignments and organizational functions but comparatively involves productive intercommunications between leaders and followers (Timperley, 2005). This implies that the general gist of distributed leadership materialization in organizations lies in organizational member's conjoint actions rather than the organizational titles they hold which reaffirms the social phenomenon that distributed leadership is regarded as (Thorpe, Gold and Lawler, 2011).

Out of the scholarly works on distributed leadership, three different frames for understanding it emerge namely: theoretical, empirical and normative (Woods, 2004). Advancements in distributed leadership literature reveal most views are on its normative

aspects (Thorpe, Gold and Lawler, 2011). Employing distributed leadership in a normative manner would as a matter of course, involve embarking on examining the form of leadership distribution in an organization in terms of style and the effect of the resulting patterns of leadership activity (Harris and Spillane, 2006). Authors accredited to the academia and enquiring in to distributed leadership are set on exploring; its meaning, how it can be transcribed and related to managerial conceptions and how it will contribute to the prevalent comprehension of what is regarded as leadership in organizations (Thorpe, Gold and Lawler, 2011). To this effect, Bolden (2011) proposes that organizations can consider using distributed leadership from a normative perspective as an agent of change to promote effectiveness of leadership and engagement of organizational members in leadership processes. Organizational change systems provide a premise on which to base the understanding of functions of a leader as a facilitator of these changes (Lakomski, 2005). It must be stated though that leadership in organizations research has neglected delving into aspects of leadership in small organizations (Jones and Crompton, 2009) which may pose a challenge for effective examining of the leadership landscape of SMEs.

In effect, distributed leadership relates to organizational circumstances where exertions of influence for leaders are applied to achieve an organizational goal thereby rechannelling views of leadership towards it being construed as a social process (Thorpe, Gold and Lawler, 2011). Even so, the determination of the scope of how this exertion of influence is effected in an organization to an extent where it is reflective of distributed leadership practice poses a challenge (Harris *et al.*, 2007). This has necessitated advancements on interpretations of distributed leadership by various scholars hereby furnishing a methodical base for the inquiry into leadership practice outside the range of analysis offered by a focus on leadership behaviours and traits (Harris, 2009). As a result, any hypothesis of distributed leadership augments the frontiers of leadership that promote the culmination of increased participation of employees through its exploitation of the array of capabilities that lie in the multiple employees in the organization (Harris and Lambert, 2003). This demonstrates how the concept of distributed leadership acknowledges that organizational members positioned at the apex of organizations are not unparalleled sources of organizational change neither are they single-handedly capable of inducing organizational glory through the direction of their subordinate organizational members (Woods *et al.*, 2004). Lakomski (2005) acknowledges the works of (Spillane John B.; Walker, Lisa J.; Loyiso, Jita, 2001; Spillane, Halverson and

Diamond, 2004), (Gronn, 2002, 2008) and (Ogawa and Bossert, 1995) as submitting scholarly work on distributed leadership that demonstrates conceptual efforts to express the social and spatial distribution of leadership practice immanent in day to day organizational practice.

Further examination of distributed leadership studies reveal that a segment of authors likens its conceptualization to the abstraction represented in the principles of participation, empowerment, engagement and delegation, though its composition is unrelated to these principles (Thorpe, Gold and Lawler, 2011). In other instances, some authors have outlined distinct similarities between depictions of distributed leadership and depictions of democratic leadership (Woods *et al.*, 2004). Bennett and Harvey (2003) cite Kayworth and Leidner's definition of distributed leadership as leadership remotely coordinated from a particular site through the means of assistive technological devices such as e mails as being a very restrictive view of distributed leadership. These varying interpretations of distributed leadership have created a build-up of overlying conceptualizations to depict shared leadership practice in organizational management implying vagueness in the definite description of distributed leadership (Harris, 2004). Consequently, reference can be made to instances where the words shared, collaborative, facilitative and participative have been used in place of distributed but all as forms of synonyms for distributed leadership (Bennett and Harvey, 2003). However, assembling the terms related to the distributed leadership concept in pursuit of gaining a precise definition of distributed leadership may result in overlooking some of its intricacies and innate inconsistencies as some authors interchange the terms or attempt to highlight any apparent difference between them, it would instead be more prudent to examine the different conceptualizations of distributed leadership and how they have been interpreted within organizational leadership (Bolden, 2011). Subsequently the categorization of views that can be likened to distributed leadership must not be sustained as it may diminish the austerity implied in both concept and framework for distributed leadership practice (Harris, 2004).

Essentially, Bennett and Harvey (2003) notes some clear definitions of distributed leadership by some scholars though there are some apparent divergences in their views that rest heavily on aspects of nomenclature. (Bennett and Harvey, 2003, p. 7) further identifies three assertions commonly held by most scholars:

- “Leadership is an emergent property of a group or network of interacting individuals”
- “There is openness to the boundaries of leadership”
- “Varieties of expertise are distributed across the many not the few.”

Gronn’s (2002) major argument conforms with the assertions above as he argues that associating leadership with systems that affect organizational tasks as components of emerging and fluid divisions in labour that are brought about by job specializations and incorporations. A useful inclusion to scenarios denoting distributed leadership in organizations given by Thorpe, Gold and Lawler (2011) are any tasks that call for employees use of their disposition with the full appreciation of the collaboratively working with other employees.

Other notable arguments on distributed leadership are given by (Spillane, Halverson and Diamond, 2004), who advance the composition of distributed leadership practice as segmenting; leaders, followers and situation and thereby simultaneously creating the three segments that are preconditions for leadership activity to take place. They hold the view that natural settings are of the essence in distributed leadership practice analysis, their focus on leadership practice is centred on how it falls in place in relations between all organizational members concerning their organizational; situations, resources and structures.

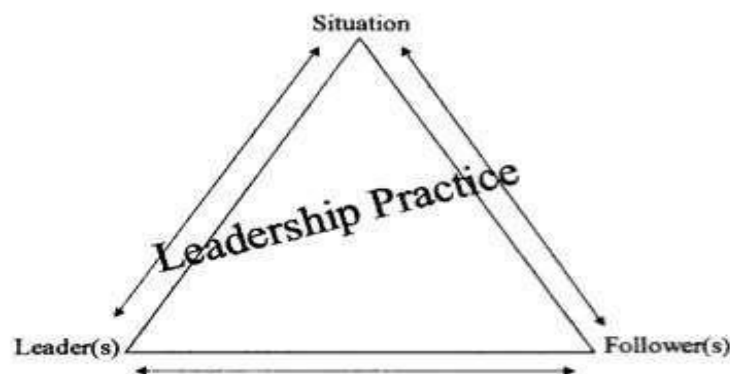


Figure 1; Spillane's constituting elements of leadership practice From (Spillane, Halverson and Diamond, 2004)

Leadership practice can be better understood when it is viewed as being spread out over organizational leaders, organizational followers and the situations that arise as they try to meet their organizational obligations (Spillane, Halverson and Diamond, 2004).

Gronn (2002) as alluded to earlier views distributed leadership as a revamped formulation of leadership abstraction, and he proposes a taxonomy that provides a classification of emergent varying distributed leadership formulations on which he bases his line of reasoning with the comprehension of distributed leadership being placed with divided roles that arise due to task specialization. Gronn's scrutiny in to the concept of distributed leadership situates itself in activity theory, through which he heightens how day to day activity in organizations performed collaboratively due to divided roles and social interaction between organizational members in free spaces can enable minute strides with huge potential for positive outcomes in organizations (Bennett and Harvey, 2003). Gronn's (2002) analysis of the distributed leadership concept proposes two discernible forms of distributed leadership—numerical action and concerted action. Ensuring profiling of concerted action extrapolates components of it: spontaneous collaboration, intuitive working relations and institutionalized practices which can each in their own right give insight into perspectives of distributed leadership (Gronn, 2002). Whilst in depicting numerical action, Gronn (2002) alludes to it as being the aggregate of leadership actions performed by all members of an organization towards fulfilment of an organizational task.

Other authors such as Leithwood *et al.*, (2008) have singled out the emerging configurations that are displayed through the practice of distributed leadership in organizations as their area of concentration as it has been suggested that some patterns of distributed leadership in the emerging configurations may impact organizations positively. Educational research with a distributed leadership focus has shown favourable outcomes for organizations emanate from distributed leadership practice and are indicative of a pragmatic relationship between distributed leadership and organizational net results (Leithwood, Harris and Hopkins, 2008). Suggested pre-conditions for progressive distributed leadership are that leadership must be distributed to organizational members capable of performing the necessary leadership tasks and any resourcefulness tapped into by these organizational members to whom leadership has been distributed must be systematically arranged (Leithwood *et al.*, 2008).

The various angles of investigations into distributed leadership practice taken by scholars either build from other views on it or use another author's views on it as the basis of their argument. Locke's integrated model of leadership as portrayed by Harris (2009) depicts the fusion of leadership influence in interactions through lateral relationships and the

preordained influential leadership that flows from hierarchical structures in organizations and the premise of which has been built on from Leithwood's two pre-conditions for progressive distributed leadership practice. Locke's model further suggests two forms of distributed leadership which Gronn labels as 'additive' and 'holistic' (Harris, 2009). The distributed leadership functions that organizational team members may engage in but has none of them accountable for any actions due to a lack of a formal set up an account for additive forms of distributed leadership, an implication of which as per Locke's model cannot promote any organizational growth (Harris *et al.*, 2007). Whilst holistic forms of distributed leadership are represented by the distributed leadership functions that are meticulously planned and synchronized by organizational members belonging to one team under the assumption that the collective efforts of any leadership tasks make up more than the value of each task (Harris, 2006).

Understanding of distributed leadership in the holistic sense entails looking past the simplistic view portrayed by the components of concerted action as being the accumulation of organizational member's contributions to the leadership process but rather as the actions of distributed leadership in the components of concerted action culminating into conjoint agency (Gronn, 2002). Refinements of holistic distribution are given by Leithwood *et al.*, (2008) pp. 41–42) as being indicative in:

Planful alignment which can be likened to Gronn's institutionalized practice component of concerted action and it arises when it is pre-determined which leadership tasks will be undertaken by specific organizational members with a laid-out plan of how tasks will be accomplished.

Spontaneous Alignment brought about when organizational members divide leadership tasks without any clearly defined procedures for the handling of the tasks at hand.

Spontaneous Misalignment emerges out of features similar to the spontaneous aligned leadership distribution but instead has very unpredictable outcomes.

Anarchic Misalignment appears when organizational members consciously disregard the distribution of leadership functions to an extent where it results in competitive actions amongst organizational units in the utilization of organizational materials.

The alternate approach inherent in distributed leadership practice of viewing leadership as the activity of organizational members and their interrelationships in the manner in which they are spread out over organizational situations (Spillane, Halverson and

Diamond, 2004), has brought about extensive engrossment in the concepts surrounding distributed leadership even though connotations of it are different (Harris and Spillane, 2006). Distributed leadership practice viewed in this manner enforces acknowledgement of the fact that different social circumstances arise in organizations which shape the structure of the distributed leadership in organizational units which in turn evokes different organizational members rising to positions of authority as situations demand and this authority ending when it is no longer required (Woods *et al.*, 2004). However, it must be emphasized that distributed leadership does not advocate for the dissolution of hierarchy in organizations as the collaborative working parties can exist for the fulfilment of a particular task in an organization that has recognizable hierarchical structures (Heikka, Waniganayake and Hujala, 2013).

Gronn (2000) regards the notions of distributed leadership as an undeveloped source of gravitating conception of leadership towards the structuring of organizational systems and organizational functions assumed by organizational members. The various distributed leadership conceptualizations pay attention to the issues surrounding the organizational contexts and how the leadership functions unfold in them and their focus is on gaining apprehension of the day to day tasks of organizations (Harris, 2006). Despite the diverse interpretations of distributed leadership that are correspondent to the multifarious organizational practices that can be understood differently in their own light, their repercussions on organizational procedures and norms remain unsearched on a larger part (Woods *et al.*, 2004).

DIMENSIONS OF DISTRIBUTED LEADERSHIP

“Thus distributed leadership in practice is not necessarily static and should be expected to change and develop in response to learning within the organization and to changing influences in the organization’s environment” (Thorpe, Gold and Lawler, 2011, p.11).

To withstand the emerging practices in organizations that are predominantly managed through collaborative practices intended for the instigation of universally held goals, leadership has taken on forms such as distributed leadership (Thorpe, Gold and Lawler, 2011). The intent of distributed leadership lies in characterized dimensions that may extend towards depicting evolving organizational structures that infer forms of leadership that are lateral and bound to facilitate stretching across organizational boundaries inherent

in hierarchical systems (Harris and Spillane, 2006). Over time leadership research has emphasized hierarchy in organizations underpinning the argument that all vital knowledge for the organization's functioning is held by organizational members at the top of the hierarchy (Thorpe, Gold and Lawler, 2011). The hierarchy must not be regarded as a yardstick for organizational unit processes running smoothly, rather it must be recognized that precise organizational tasks and different employee workloads result in organizational differentiation which is not always dependent on what a leader knows and hence notions that leaders have the best knowledge cannot be substantiated (Lakomski, 2005).

As organizations grow they may present convoluted processes that even the leader may not be able to comprehend all the intricate details of the processes on their own and as such will be required to look to other employees in the organization for the application of their expertise, hence they will share parts of the processes with other employees in order to get tasks accomplished (Pearce and Sims, 2002). Consequently, designated leaders with formal organizational positions can feasibly embark on the institutionalization of distributed leadership using a normative standpoint for its implementation in their organizations provided they gain an understanding of how leadership unfolds in their organization when incorporated with power and authority (Thorpe, Gold and Lawler, 2011). The various configurations in which distributed leadership may manifest itself in presupposes an eminent presence of alliances among those in leadership and the authority in their roles arises as a result of the social interactions which have the potency to promote organizational learning for individuals taking part in a given activity (Pearce and Conger, 2003). The contemporary transformational inferences inherent in distributed leadership practice in organizations typify organizational learning whilst stressing the importance of distinct contextual aspects of organizational operations (Lakomski, 2005).

Bennett and Harvey (2003) point out that there are precise constructs of distributed leadership whose characteristic depiction will be dependent on matters of how organizational procedures heed to all employees taking part in the process as well as consideration of: the organizational structures; organizational practices and organizational values of a specific organizational context. This means any further scrutiny of aspects of distributed leadership in different organizational contexts will necessitate inquiry in to issues such as: the constitution of distributed leadership; distinguishing distributed leadership from other managerial forms of leadership techniques; how

distributed leadership can be applied and the conceptualization of distributed leadership (Thorpe, Gold and Lawler, 2011). In support of this, a synopsis by Harris (2003) on distributed leadership dimensions in leadership by teachers brings out four dimensions; brokering, participating, mediating and relationships. To identify any dimensions of distributed leadership in SMEs would require the disposition of how social interaction facilitates comprehension of leadership in SMEs (Kempster, 2006), this implies acknowledging the participative environment that such social interaction in the pursuit of entrepreneurial activity creates (Kempster, Cope and Parry, 2010). This justifies why distributed leadership is undergoing intense study in the fields of applied psychology and management literature and as such it is now appreciated as being beneficial normatively (Harris and Spillane, 2006).

Where distributed leadership is implemented from a normative angle an organization would be obliged to probe the effectiveness of a leadership style whether the preferred style is the additive or the holistic application of distributed leadership, as they will function accordingly in the organizational context they are applied (Harris and Spillane, 2006). Inept displays of leadership patterns that have been dispersed, but have the organizational members involved without regard of actions of other organizational members within their team depict additive forms of distributed leadership (Harris, 2006). Additive forms of distributed leadership are indicative of parallel leadership, whilst the other form which is holistic is characterized by calculated and preconceived interactions of organizational members within a team performing leadership functions and is also referred to as person-plus leadership (Spillane, Halverson and Diamond, 2004). An analysis of formations of leadership in the public sector and SMEs revealed a noteworthy dearth of experiential documentation depicting distributed leadership in these contexts (Thorpe, Gold and Lawler, 2011). Despite this, Lechlar (2001) argues that an important decisive factor for success in SMEs is social interaction which places emphasis on collaborative engagements of a blend of individuals with different kinds of expertise. This social interaction highlighted in SME teams depicts some emergence of distributed leadership dimensions in the SME context (Kempster, Cope and Parry, 2010). Kempster, Cope and Parry (2010) further identify a need for prospects to encourage investigation of the evolution of distributed leadership in SMEs.

From a general point of view with no specified kind of organization in mind, the application of normative theory of distributed leadership to organizational research would

require explicit understanding of the context and objective of the leadership practice, whereas contemplation of the different justifications for distributed leadership in organizations will draw attention to its functional dimensions (Thorpe, Gold and Lawler, 2011). The normative application of distributed leadership imminently implies embarking on an examination of the appearance of the form, genre of how leadership is dispersed in an organization and the effect that the various models of distributed leadership interactions will have on an organization. Harris (2006) proposes four dimensions of distributed leadership rooted in a normative angle.

The first dimension of distributed leadership is descriptive and may arise out of the defined arrangement of activity in the operations of professionally capable working teams prompting an investigation as to what form of leadership appears (Harris and Spillane, 2006). If taken as a normative stance for distributed leadership application, this dimension must not be regarded as a quick fix in terms of installing a leader that emerges out of the organizational teams; instead organizations need to put in place structural mechanisms that foster teamwork and then identifying those employees who can perform leadership tasks on the basis of their team performance (Harris, 2006).

A second dimension of distributed leadership is the predictive dimension. It is apparent in the verified suggestions that the various models of distributed leadership practice that may emerge in organizations will result in divergent influence on the evolution of an organization to predict better organizational outcomes (Harris and Spillane, 2006). Views have been endorsed that distributed leadership practice is in congruence with positive organizational outcomes, although these emergent styles of distributed leadership will have disparate effects on the development of an organization (Harris, 2009).

In the third dimension of distributed leadership, there is an illustration of alternate views of leadership that are on the rise due to demands on organizations from external forces, giving it some representational potential (Harris & Spillane 2008). In such instances distributed leadership manifests as a representational dimension, where there are recognizable forms of joint efforts that are lateral and cross organizational boundaries, signalling the formation of alliances and networks (Harris 2006).

The fourth dimension of distributed leadership is an illustrative dimension; where it becomes evident where dispersed leadership activities are multiplied to counter the effects of the accumulation of organizational tasks (Harris, 2006). This resultant increase

in disseminated practices of leadership through distributed leadership implementation in organizations is an indication of it having an illustrative dimension (Harris 2008). This illustrative dimension is indicative of the necessity to apportion duties through broadening leadership activity amongst employees in an organization to facilitate participation in management functions (Harris, 2006).

Attempts are being made in studies of distributed leadership to clearly define how the disparate forms of distributed leadership alter outcomes in organizations (Leithwood *et al.*, 2008). Distributed leadership as a leadership practice that is focused on collective actions offers an alternative means of measuring leadership with a group as its factor of measurement as opposed to the views of leadership where an individual is used as a factor of measurement (Harris, 2006). The actual application of distributed leadership has however been described as being compositely structured, more so the latent matters of power setups in SME contexts may inhibit progressive development of distributed leadership in them (Kempster, Cope and Parry, 2010).

The accomplishment of successful distributed leadership implementation is highly dependent on management's resourcefulness; they have the responsibility of laying out the organizational settings to support its implementation (Harris, 2006). Primarily, a normative orientation of scrutiny of distributed leadership in organizations would entail examining the manner in which leadership is distributed and how the variations of intensity of its distribution will affect organizational functioning, by way of examining the course the distributed leadership takes and any impediments to its distribution in the surrounding organizational contexts (Harris, 2006). Some configurations of distributed leadership may either have a prolific effect or a detrimental effect on organizational outcomes (Leithwood *et al.*, 2008). In an attempt to critically analyse distributed leadership, Thorpe, Gold and Lawler (2011) put forward a framework that initiates considering two dimensions — 'planned activity against emergent activity' and 'aligned activity against non-aligned activity'. Using frames of reference for normative distributed leadership provide a means of comprehending the bond between organizational leadership and organizational activity (Harris, 2006).

In this vein, Thorpe *et al.* (2011) suggest utilizing the quadrants in figure 2 in the following ways:

- deciphering the distributed leadership articulations to analyse the practical progression of distributed leadership in environments,
- administering distributed leadership practice embarked on by managerial staff and
- applying as a foundation for the study of distributed leadership by academics.

Bolden's (2011) agrees with authors calling for distributed leadership theory as an alternative to the mainstream analytic frameworks, because it can probe leadership from the perspective of daily practices as opposed to a focus on the functions, structures and roles of leadership.

Thorpe *et al.* (2011) draw on work by Leithwood *et al.* (2007), and Iles and Feng (2011), that use the quadrants in figure 2. The quadrants are formed by plotting the axes of two dimensions of distributed leadership: a continuum between planned activity and emergent activity and a continuum between aligned activity and non-aligned activity.

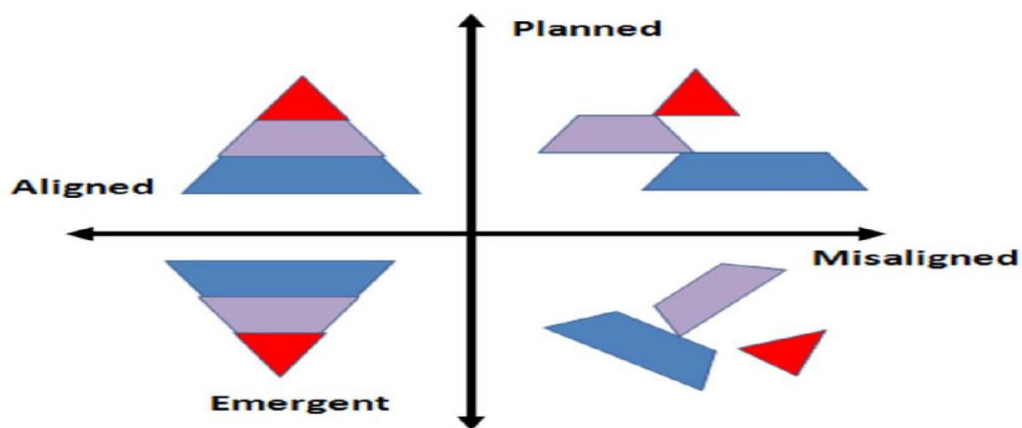


Figure 2; Dimensions of distributed leadership adapted from Leithwood *et al.*, (2007), and Iles and Feng (2011) From (Thorpe, Gold and Lawler, 2011)

The continuum that has planned activity on one end and emergent activity on the other end compares the two forms of distributed leadership as described by Gibb (1954, 1968). Here there is acknowledgement of the fact that any organizational member can perform a leadership task and that leadership in a team is indicative in the accumulation of all leadership activity by organizational members. Distribution of leadership acts here are done under prescribed conventional organizational procedures and this is what the planned activity represents, Whilst the emergent activity is capacitated by emergent and holistic forms of distributed leadership that view leadership as transpiring in organizational teams through organizational members' communal interactions (Thorpe, Gold and Lawler, 2011).

The other continuums on the aligned activity and non-aligned activity axis are as per the views of (Leithwood *et al.*, 2008) and (Harris, 2006). The aligned activity entails organizational member's activity is driven by an organizational vision that is shared by all employees whereas the non-aligned activity occurs in instances where organizational members operate in the oblivion of other employees' activity or the perceived benefits of shared organizational visions (Thorpe, Gold and Lawler, 2011).

Illustration of patterns showing how leadership is distributed serve as a mechanism for seeing how leadership is distributed in organizations and how it can be utilized to mould leadership to desired forms (Spillane, Halverson and Diamond, 2004). Thus, the systematic conceptualization of distributed leadership done to achieve the desired form of it can provide a potential means of gaining insight into organizational leadership by examining how subordinates also play an active role in organizational leadership as they interact with their superiors (Harris, 2006).

As demonstrated by Thorpe, Gold and Lawler (2011) distributed leadership can be studied from a normative stance by using this four quadrant analytical frame. Such an analysis reveals the basic structure of underlying distributed leadership systems in an organization.

“The normative position is chiefly concerned with knowing what leadership looks like when it is distributed and how different degrees of distribution impact upon organizational performance. It requires one to consider the flow and direction of distribution and the resistance to distribution within different organizational contexts” (Gronn, 2008).

Any acquiesce to distributed leadership practice also implies structural organizational change driven by leadership practice signifies recognition of interactions of organizational members as guided by their organizational context (Harris, 2006). SMEs in their capacity as informal organizations will equally have their own organizational contexts. The available literature on SMEs reveals that leadership practice in their context has the domineering effect of a heroic leader (Ensley, Pearce and Hmieleski, 2006). The centrality of organizational context in distributed leadership arises on account of relationships among organizational members that flourish in unusual organizational settings coupled with the challenges that arise for leadership depending on particular circumstances (Thorpe, Gold and Lawler, 2011).

A normative stance for distributed leadership operationalization in an organization will reveal different dimensions of distributed leadership practice (Gronn, 2008). What this brings to light is that not all organizational contexts will provide favourable conditions for distributed leadership to thrive (Woods *et al.*, 2004). Despite several scholars associating the distributed leadership ideology with impressions of participation, engagement and delegation, it embodies something dissimilar and is seemingly attractive due to lack of widespread knowledge of it as a concept and its lack of application in certain contexts (Thorpe, Gold and Lawler, 2011). Distributed leadership has gained its popularity through its theoretical scheme and conceptualization that disagrees with the notion that leadership is a functional role of an organizational head (Harris, 2006). It would, therefore, be beneficial for organizations to regard distributed leadership as an emergent aspect of leadership whose functionality can be reviewed through its different profiles (Bolden, 2011).

PROMINENCE OF THE DISTRIBUTED LEADERSHIP CONCEPT

“On the credit side of the ledger, distributed leadership has helped to expose limitations inherent in leadership understood individually and has tempered its rather inflated view of human agency. Moreover, thanks also to distributed leadership, the field seems much more willing to accommodate a plurality of analyses that may be positioned somewhere on a continuum from concentrated to dispersed leadership” (Gronn, 2008, p. 3).

In the conservative views, leadership emerges as a focal point where some form of control is expended for assured control of an organization’s functions (Lakomski, 2005). Lipman-Blumen as cited in Bolden (2011) postulate that the leader-centric style of management was a common attribute of 20th century organizations as it gave a superficial assurance of orderliness and control that suited organization heads but no longer satisfies the demands in modern times and needs to be reconsidered. The pervasiveness of the heroic leader view and its superiority in leadership theory tend to conceal the scores of variant factors that can present opportunities for embracing achievements or highlighting underachievement and the catastrophic effects of focusing on the select few (Bolden *et al.*, 2015).

“Today, the field of leadership focuses not only on the leader but also on followers, peers, supervisors, work setting/context, and culture, including a much

broader array of individuals representing the entire spectrum of diversity, public, private, and not-for-profit organizations, and increasingly over the past 20 years, samples of populations from nations around the globe” (Avolio, Walumbwa and Weber, 2009, p. 422).

Modern-day leadership theorists such as Clegg (2011) hold that definitions of leadership with a depiction of a heroic leader are inadequate as they do not portray the ingrained intricacies of the social interactions and complicated environments at play as leadership practice is taking place. Even though the representative forms of the new-fangled approaches depicting dispersed leadership practices still require much more analysis, they draw attention to the need for developing support mechanisms for collaborative interactions and interconnected systems in organizations as opposed to enhancing skills and behaviours of organizational members in formalized leadership positions (Bolden *et al.*, 2015). The ideological construct of distributed leadership brings forth decentralized organizational procedures whilst providing a means of understanding the dissection of functional organizational units of an organization (Gronn, 2008).

Taking a glance back to the leadership theory landscape of the "nineteen-hundreds" decade reveals some representation of conceptual exploration in to distributed leadership from authors such as; Stogdill (1950) who conjured up conceptualizations on leadership that it emanates from the disparity in tasks that are linked to the influential factors at play on organizational members' actions as they strive to meet organizational goals. Katz and Kahn (1952) endorsed the importance of dispersed leadership in their analysis over different industrial situations; their findings highlight the differential role of a supervisor in effecting productivity and providing morale for workers as they portray how a working group in an organization that has supervisors at the top stipulating their work activity will not yield good results.

Over the last few decades, distributed leadership as a concept has been explored by several authors, whose focus has been the linking of distributed leadership patterns to organizational changes that are favorable (Harris *et al.*, 2007). Some authors who have contributed to existing distributed leadership theorizations with a primary focus on the context of how distributed leadership practice in organizations translates to positive organizational outcomes and are worth noting for the purpose of this investigation, include but are not limited to Gronn (2002, 2008), Bolden (2011), Spillane (2006), Harris (2008), Leithwood *et al.*, (2004, 2007). These empirical observations that have been

undertaken on distributed leadership have led to assessments on its impact owing to the fact that it displays indications of sustained existence for organizations (Gronn, 2008). As a result, distributed leadership has continued to gain fortitude and has made strides in specific sectors as it has been applied to chosen sectors both theoretically and practically (Bolden, 2011). Potentially, the relational leader-led application of leadership that is prevalent in SMEs presents possibility for scoping any manifestation of distributed leadership in them (Cope, Kempster and Parry, 2011).

The general gist of distributed leadership materialization in organizations lies in organizational member's conjoint actions rather than the organizational titles they hold which affirms the social phenomenon that distributed leadership is regarded as (Thorpe, Gold and Lawler, 2011). In conformity, Gronn's scrutiny in to the concept of distributed leadership situates itself in activity theory, through which he heightens how day to day activity in organizations performed collaboratively due to divided roles and social interaction between organizational members in free spaces can enable minute strides with huge potential for positive outcomes in organizations (Bennett and Harvey, 2003). Homer (1997) equally proclaims that leadership goes beyond the necessity of an individual providing guidance for a group whilst simultaneously fulfilling the role of a resource; it entails the culmination of the utilization of appropriate resources, the input of ideas from others and the configuration of the group socially. Social influence is also rife in SME contexts based on the endorsed interactions that take place in entrepreneurial teams and are subsequently absorbed in the enterprising social contexts where what transpires out of these participatory environments guides the enterprise and has an impact of on the enterprise's development (Kempster, Cope and Parry, 2010).

One of the stipulations for desirable distributed leadership implementation by Locke's integrated model of leadership is that leadership has to be distributed across different arrangements of lateral influence (Harris *et al.*, 2007). Distributed leadership implementation process being one that has to be rationally aligned requires issues arising as a result of its implementation such as boundaries of leadership and the degrees of autonomy and control that will be given to organizational members performing leadership functions to be defined (Bennett and Harvey, 2003). This would warrant organizations adopting distributed leadership to loosen boundaries of leadership raising questions as to which organizational members can potentially perform leadership functions; it must be noted though that distributed leadership practice perspectives do not prescribe the nature

of the boundary that must be set (Woods *et al.*, 2004). For this reason, distributed leadership is rising to popularity as it denotes the transforming of post-industrial work conditions that cannot be managed in a top-down, expert, command and control structure (Western, 2013). Further prevalence of distributed leadership practice in organizations can be attributed to how it equips the viewing of the practice of leadership in a different light by rationalizing organizational transformations (Harris and Spillane, 2006) and deviating from views based on attributing task execution in organizations to individual leaders (Bolden, 2011). Added renunciation of views that leadership is the responsibility of just one person has also been given by Spillane and Sherer (2004) based on Vygotsky's activity theory work, they emphasize practice or activity as being the essential elements of leadership practice analysis rather than the individual. Auspiciously, distributed leadership presents a notion of leadership that counteracts individualism with collectivism which favours collective efforts (Thorpe, Gold and Lawler, 2011). SMEs today are operating in business environments that have been altered due to rampant economic factors prompting them to be knowledge-based; knowledge by nature is widespread amongst individuals in the enterprise and this brings to the fore necessitated pooled execution of tasks (Kempster, Cope and Parry, 2010).

These alterations are features of modern organizational environments which definitely require new leadership perspectives such as distributed leadership in order to overcome the novel challenges that they may present (Harris and Spillane, 2006). The remodelling of organizational structures and systems can be seen as a pivotal role of distributed leadership (Hargreaves, 2007). However, in order to ascertain which form of distributed leadership would best suit an organization, consideration of the organization's context is of paramount significance (Bolden *et al.*, 2015). This entails that organizations intending to practice distributed leadership will have to define their own model as particular constructs of distributed leadership are dependent on what the organizational structure permits and defined by the enabling conditions of the organizational contexts (Woods *et al.*, 2004). It must equally be emphasized that in order for leadership activities of an organization to bring about differential effectiveness through distributed leadership practice there must be a focus on; the intricacy of the distribution of these leadership activities, the social aspects of how task enactments are distributed and the position of the organizational artifacts in the chosen distributed leadership pattern (Timperley, 2005).

Essentially distributed leadership comes across as a rational angle of examining leadership which permits one to pick alternatives that suit their organizational context when it comes to its implementation (Bennett and Harvey, 2003). This illustrates that organizations would benefit greatly from embarking on a discursive course of adopting aspects of distributed leadership to suit their context. Currie, Lockett and Suhomlinova (2007) assert that the nascence of distributed leadership in organizational practices is potentially possible as it is comprised of regulatory, normative and cultural- cognitions that are indicative of institutional constituents that can be immersed into the systems of the organization as a whole. This explicit identification of the contextual attributes of organizational operations as well as organizational practice intricacies other than a focus on traditional designated positional leaders is gratifying shift in the field of leadership studies (Lakomski, 2005).

A notable distinction between distributed leadership and the more traditional leadership approaches is that it endeavors to offer a systemic perspective on leadership with a thrust towards interpretations of regarding organizational structure as a channel for executing tasks using a strategy and not merely just a supplementary tool for leaders of an organization Bolden (2011), Spillane, Halverson, and Diamond (2004) and Harris and Spillane (2008) advance the normative potentiality of distributed leadership as one of the main reasons for its rise to fame. “Distributed leadership tends to be considered from a normative perspective, as a means for enhancing the effectiveness of, and engagement with, leadership processes” (Bolden, 2011, p. 6). For an organization taking a normative position for distributed leadership implementation on account of gaining from its perceived benefits, it would be imperative for it to envisage how the leadership once distributed will be sanctioned and under which circumstances and contexts will this distribution be differentially beneficial for the organization (Timperley, 2005). Context arises here once more as it is a cardinal component owing to the distinctive settings in which organizational relationships are formed and the specific leadership challenges are encountered within these relationships in conformity with organizational occurrences (Thorpe, Gold and Lawler, 2011).

Despite several authors proposing the fathoming of organizational leadership through a Distributed leadership lens, its prominence appears to be confined to specific geographical locations- the UK and the educational management sector areas (Bolden, 2011). An all-inclusive outlook of distributed leadership is the recognition of all

organizational members who are actively engaged in leadership activity regardless of whether they have a marked-out leadership role in the organization or not (Harris and Spillane, 2006). This is evident in renditions of distributed leadership as they not only render it as a view of leadership that is no longer fully centred on one individual but one that also takes into account how leadership can be shared amongst several individuals insinuating demands to envisage it as a social process (Bolden, 2011).

Nevertheless, Timperly (2005) highlights the mutual agreement amongst several authors that distributed leadership extends beyond task division for organizational members performing their assigned organizational roles and goes as far as encompassing interactions between multiple organizational members engaged in distributed leadership roles that drive organizational goals. Predominantly the objective of distributed leadership is about reviewing how the macro organizational functions and the micro undertakings of leaders in organizations are intertwined which requires moving past focus on a leader's micro tasks but actually investigating their enactment (Spillane and Sherer, 2004). In conformity, Gronn (2002) portrays distributed leadership as a way of fragmenting leadership practice for evaluation in a functional relation between the different sections in an organization which he regards as being a changeable and determinate phenomenon. Lakomski (2005) accredits the works of Spillane, Halverson and Diamond (2004, 2001) and Gronn (2000, 2002) as an undertaking to give a representative view of the day to day tasks of an organization as analyzed through an organization's social and dispersed distribution of leadership functions. To this effect, organizations may be lured to adopting distributed leadership in modes that suit their organizational operations as it depicts their leadership formations meticulously (Woods and Gronn, 2009).

Leadership has its ramifications resulting in leadership activity to be spread out amongst several employees where chores are achieved through various organizational heads' interactions which are implicit of leadership being dispersed socially (Hulpia *et al.*, 2012). One may thus assume that it may be relatively easy to apply the conceptions of the leadership formations that distributed leadership proposes to other sectors other than the educational sector, based on Thorpe Gold and Lawler (2011) contemplations that distributed leadership emanates from social circumstances that arise in organizational contexts. The devising of leadership as a systematically arranged activity that is embedded in socially influential processes that are not entirely controlled by a leader in

an organization- a notion of distributed leadership, by essence appears to be fixed in organizational contexts (Cope, Kempster and Parry, 2011). Similarly, the social interaction of individuals with different skills and capabilities in an entrepreneurial team is one of the factors that can decisively affect the success an enterprises business ventures (Lechlar, 2001). Past research on organizational teams has proved that team-based activity, where tasks have been divided amongst various organizational members yields high organizational task accomplishment (Kempster, Cope and Parry, 2010). In terms of outlook on leadership, distributed leadership provides one that is considerate of the modified organizational designs and requirements in organizations (Thorpe, Gold and Lawler, 2011), indicating that an SME may have an organizational design with its distinct social process that may be indicative of distributed leadership practice.

CONTEXTUALISATION OF DISTRIBUTED LEADERSHIP WITHIN AN SME CONTEXT

SMEs are part of the contemporary society that has arisen out of increased human interactions and globalization which has resulted in changes in today's business environments (Jones and Crompton, 2009). A range of expressions can be used to envisage what an SME is and its magnitude can be placed into context on account of the number of employees it employs or the amounts of its annual turnover or the economic sector area it operates in (Abor and Quartey, 2010). The flourishing of an SME is dependent on favourable conditions in business environments (Nuwagaba, 2015). Prevailing factors in the present-day business environments are finance, strategy and innovation; these necessitate investigations into the leadership of SMEs which arises mainly out of a need to understand what prompts success in these enterprises and puts them at a competitive level (Jones and Crompton, 2009).

To create a favourable environment for SMEs, the Government of Zambia implemented private sector reforms in the Zambian business environment by simplifying registration processes for businesses and one of its areas of focus was the micro small and medium enterprises. Enforcement of these reforms was expected to increase productivity in the Zambian business environment (MCTI, 2007). Countries worldwide consider SMEs as being constituent elements of their national economies (Gallato *et al.*, 2012). Nuwagaba (2015) regards SMEs as being at the frontline of expediting strides for growth of country's economies. Value of SMEs in influencing economic development for countries comes in

form of job creation, a widening of the tax base for countries, and improvement of earnings of those in the low-end bracket (MCTI, 2007).

As the SME grows and operational and strategic management issues begin to come to light, the owner-manager will require more individuals in the organization to participate in decision making as the owner-manager alone can no longer be accountable and responsible for everything, a dilemma arises thereby presenting a clear reason for the adoption of distributed leadership (Kempster, Cope and Parry, 2010). Momentum in organizations for distributed leadership implementation is likely to emerge as a result of their resolve to rethink the leadership landscapes which may compel them to engage in structural reorganization (Woods *et al.*, 2004). One of Lakomski (2005) convictions for distributed leadership practice in organizations is its radical perspective of leadership rationale as it impels the leadership rationalizations to acknowledge varying forms of leadership influence and not just recognize a superior's leadership influence. This then prompts this argument to look towards leadership distribution in an SME team rather than a heroic individual figure in the owner-manager. Essentially, the notion of the entrepreneurial team is perhaps an appropriate place to commence an examination of distributed leadership manifestation in SMEs (Kempster, Cope and Parry, 2010).

Plausibility for different ideologies of distributed leadership, some of which may take an angle of examining the manner in which leadership in an organization is structured (Woods *et al.*, 2004), in this particular case focus will be inclined to views of representative forms of leadership undertaken by a team as opposed to authoritative forms of leadership undertaken by an owner-manager in an SME. Cope, Kempster and Perry (2011) expose the sparseness of leadership research that is centered on aspects of teams within an informal organization such as an SME, which diminishes even further on perceptions of distributed leadership and hence little is available to give a verifiable understanding of how an SME leader can transition from heroic owner-manager aspects of leadership to entrepreneurial team-oriented aspects of leadership. Literature from both academics and management practitioners have shown recognition of distributed leadership for its applicability in practice-based social sciences but there may not be enough application to social science fields such as business studies fields (Thorpe, Gold and Lawler, 2011). The nature of an SME context in the discussion here is an informal organization founded by an owner-manager which they intend to manage as a small business to further their personal ambitions (Jones and Crompton, 2009). SMEs have been

validated as informal organizations on account of their significant role of being bountiful employment generators and fortifiers of national economies (Abor and Quartey, 2010).

Suffice to say, entrepreneurs set up their enterprises with an intention to engage in entrepreneurial activity that is referred to as “creative destruction,” a process accomplished by the entrepreneur through carrying out new combinations of productive endeavours. (Darling, Gabrielsson and Seristö, 2007, p. 2). Lechler (2001) draws attention to the fact that business endeavours undertaken under the guise of a team have proven to be more successful than those undertaken by individuals. Distributed manoeuvres in an organization that hinge on teamwork have been proven to lead to greater productivity than those based on individuals’ efforts (Kempster, Cope and Parry, 2010). Cohesive views to this are given by Gibb, an Australian psychologist as cited in Harris et al (2007), who may be attributed to as one of the early authors who made an attempt to decipher how series of actions denoting influence play out in groups whether formal or informal. In relation to this, accomplishments in a team are dependent on the decisive role that leaders play in guidance of their team towards having collective standard measures or handling their organizational contexts and organizing collaborative efforts (Mehra *et al.*, 2006).

Seemingly, distributed leadership further makes plain its focus on the team and group dynamics and distinct organizational procedures in which are engrained the pragmatic organizational activities through which cognizance of organizational functionalities can be gained (Lakomski, 2005). Consequently, the emplacement of entrepreneurial activity is in the employees of the enterprise and not just the owner-manager, as SMEs operations are under the semblance of an entrepreneurial team (Kempster, Cope and Parry, 2011). This can be beneficial as SMEs with functional entrepreneurial teams have lowered entrepreneurial tension arising from their entrepreneurial activities (Lechlar, 2001). Any alterations that are likely to occur in the already existing social configurations of an organization may have an impact on the organization’s leadership practices (Avolio, Walumbwa and Weber, 2009). Whatever the cause for any alterations in organizational functions, organizational team occurrences will resemble those of normal human groupings where it is infrequently the case that there is only one leader but other undesignated leaders from people in the group become apparent from time to time (Mehra *et al.*, 2006). Similarly, claims are made by Lechler (2001) of the prevalence of social capital being higher in an entrepreneurial team than in the owner-manager on their own,

placing emphasis on teams as they have an integration of expertise from the various individual members of the team. In further support of distributed leadership practice in teams translating to success views, past research verifies that distributed leadership practice can contribute to a team's success and translate to fruitfulness in organizations as compared to leadership practice of traditional modes of leadership (Pearce and Sims, 2002). However, outcomes of the capacity of an entrepreneurial team are dependent on the team members' qualities and the parameters of the team objectives (Lechlar, 2001).

Eminently, distributed leadership calls for organizational teams to coordinate the vital leadership activities to be performed collectively in their team (Yukl, 1999). Ideally, it is the duty of the SME owner-manager to direct and give sustained guidance to employees in the organization who use their capabilities to result in beneficial outcomes for the organization (Jones and Crompton, 2009). The manner in which owner-managers are regarded as the resident champions of their enterprises owing to their innate drive to push towards success puts them at the core of facilitating distributed leadership approaches (Kempster, Cope and Parry, 2010). As a consequence, some authors have set forth distributed leadership as comparable to jazz as the tempo of organizational goals flows as employees take charge of the various organizational units (Harris, 2004).

Although, in order for leadership activities of an organization to bring about differential effectiveness through distributed leadership practice there must be a focus on the intricacy of the distribution of these leadership activities, the social aspects of how task enactments are distributed and the position of the organizational artifacts in the chosen distributed leadership pattern (Timperley, 2005). Ideally, Organizations intending to practice distributed leadership will have to define their own model as particular constructs of distributed leadership are dependent on what the organizational structure permits and defined by the enabling conditions of the organizational contexts (Woods et al). It is worth noting, that there are configurations of distributed leadership that have been appraised and declared as suited for SME environments, and they place emphasis on concentrating on the leader and follower interactions that may emerge of both the owner-manager and their employees (Kempster, Cope and Parry, 2010).

SME Leaders can maximize the potential of their teams implementing practices based on the distributed leadership concept. This can be supported by the principles of distributed leadership, as it facilitates tapping into relevant skills and expert knowledge of employees in the organization regardless of which organizational role an employee may have (Harris

et al., 2007). Consequently, in an attempt to pave way for distributed leadership in their enterprise, an SME owner-manager is not only faced with the challenge of harnessing potential opportunities but also has a challenge of being capable of mobilizing their available resources to grab the opportunity and capitalize on it (Cogliser and Brigham, 2004). These challenges have been brought about by the increase in job activity differentiation in organizations which in turn have given rise to patterns of interdependency amongst organizational members sparking the need for endorsing a distributive approach to task systemization in organizations (Gronn, 2002). Distributed leadership practice provides a tangible focus for organizations that have the desire to remodel their task composition with a view of promoting organizational efficiency (Mayrowetz *et al.*, 2007). The implementation of distributed leadership in an organization may be for reasons of having it as a permanent feature in organizational teams and formalized organizational formations or it may be used in impromptu situations and implemented through special temporary organizational member groupings (Woods *et al.*, 2004).

Instinctively, distributed leadership practice brings out the importance of distributing influential processes in organizations where the leadership must have distinctive characteristics from forceful or coercive influential processes (Robinson, 2008). Bolden *et al* (2015) explicitly refer to this as the ‘celebrity of leadership’ - an apparent supposition of the personal attributes of leaders with senior managerial positions that shape organizational success, leading to situations where their remuneration is much higher than other members of the organization in lower positions. The celebrity of leadership view is prevalent in entrepreneurship as SMEs are created out of ventures that are based on the obligation of individuals (Kempster, Cope and Parry, 2010) this makes it inherent that leadership of the venture will come from the founder who sets organizational goals and directs their employees towards the perceived mission of their venture (Ensley, Pearce and Hmieleski, 2006). Consequently, SMEs are dominantly viewed as organizations with recognized leadership influence of the owner-manager as the constricted interpretive views of leadership by the owner-manager will usually be inclined towards heroic, even so, such kind of leadership may not be suitable as the enterprise becomes more established (Kempster, Cope and Parry, 2010). The kind of vertical leadership with the owner-manager at the top of the hierarchy is only indispensable in the first years of business as the owner-manager has to ensure that what they envision for the enterprise plays out as

they influence employees (Ensley, Pearce and Hmieleski, 2006). This could be compounded due to the fact that organizations are becoming professional work environments where the leadership activity that takes place must withstand pooled initiatives from organizational members to meet a shared organizational vision (Thorpe, Gold and Lawler, 2011). This reinforces conjoint activity which is the inculcation of distributed leadership practice in organizations and arises out of activity in teams and partnerships (Harris, 2004).

Thorpe, Gold and Lawler (2011) in their attempts to decipher the notions that characterize distributed leadership cite Gibb's argument that leadership would be better understood if it were contrived as constitutive of a group and as such comprising of fixed undertakings that must be performed by the group. Given the positive changes in job designs that the practice of distributed leadership facilitates, SME managers could be obliged to ensure that they instigate transition mechanisms for distributed leadership practice in their enterprises. It is noteworthy though, that ideas corresponding to essential features of distributed leadership vary and repercussions of distributed leadership on organizational procedures have not been extensively researched. This has brought about an emanation of the different demonstrations of the interpretations of distributed leadership (Cope, Kempster and Parry, 2011). This lack of adequate amounts of information on research on distributed leadership renders it difficult to determine where it can be applied best, however evidence has proved its beneficial utilization is pertinent to prevailing circumstances (Bennett and Harvey, 2003).

Evidently, in examining the dimensions of distributed leadership in SMEs one must recognize a kind of leadership that is overemphasized in these informal business-oriented organizations – entrepreneurial leadership (Kempster, Cope and Parry, 2010). Entrepreneurial leadership defined by Gupta et al (2004) as a form of leadership that generates employee commitment to a vision of series of developments for the enterprise held by the owner-manager, and as such SMEs operate within the confines of entrepreneurial leadership. Another portrayal of entrepreneurial leadership, with depiction of the owner manager in mind, portrays it in this light, “an individual typically identifies an opportunity to be pursued and then, as an entrepreneur, must surround himself/herself with individuals to help make it happen, providing the leadership necessary to develop those individuals while at the same time nurturing excellence in the organization” (Darling, Gabrielsson and Seristö, 2007). Owner managers as leaders of

SMEs are required to assume entrepreneurial mentalities due to stringent changes that their enterprises are required to make (Jones and Crompton, 2009). SMEs with an employee population of not more than 50 employees are distinctly under the control of owner-managers and as a result, all endeavours of the SME are a manifestation of what motivates the owner manager (Jones and Crompton, 2009).

An individual cannot be proficient in all operational areas of an organization (Gronn, 2008). distributed leadership practice puts forward vital organizational functions being undertaken through concerted action by skilled organizational members who rely on correlative relationships that they form amongst themselves (Thorpe et al 2008) thereby reinforcing the idea of teamwork. High yielding managerial teams continuously ensure that leadership activity is dispersed amongst managers with the applicable capability to lead activity in an area they are competent in after which activities to fulfil the task at hand are fulfilled in unison as a departmental team (Ensley, Pearce and Hmieleski, 2006). It is the responsibility of the owner-manager to ensure that their managerial practices generate an atmosphere in the SME that encourages participation whilst cultivating a sense of motivation, commitment and independence in their employees although this may be a challenge as employees in the SME setting tend to regard themselves as mere support staff hereby augmenting the heroic nature of the owner-manager (Kempster and Cope, 2010). Another deterrent to owner-managers cultivating participation in their employees is that the employees in an SME are likely to have low levels of education owing to the fact that the enterprise being a small business may not be able to afford to have highly educated individuals as part of their staff as it cannot afford to remunerate them accordingly and as such, the what will prevail in the SME is that there will be no close relationship between the owner-manager and their employees (Lans *et al.*, 2008). Resultantly, antagonism brews in SME contexts as the progression of leadership is affected by owner-managers who subjugate their employees with unaccommodating authoritativeness (Leitch, McMullan and Harrison, 2009). This implies that distributed leadership perceptions will be unfamiliar to the owner-manager regardless of the underlying benefits practising it may have for their enterprise (Kempster and Cope, 2010).

Expanding business ventures in SMEs call for the instigation of more participative forms of leadership (Ensley, Pearce and Hmieleski, 2006) despite views of concurrent entrepreneurship models calling for the reinforcement of the heroic model of leadership

in entrepreneurship by the owner-manager in order for employees to capably serve the enterprise (Jones and Crompton, 2009).

ANTICIPATED CHALLENGES OF DISTRIBUTED LEADERSHIP APPLICATION IN SMES

The SME context is comprised of prototypical manifestations of leadership and the connotation is that the owner-manager envisages leadership in such a manner that it influences their leadership practice unequivocally; implying that examining the establishment and impediment of distributed leadership in SMEs requires some application of the ideas behind the implicit theories of leadership (Kempster, Cope and Parry, 2010). This is inculcated by the influence that implicit theories of leadership exert on the owner-managers and the employees in persuading them to hold the mutual considerations of the heroic figurehead in the owner-manager (Epitropaki and Martin, 2005). As people exit and go through the motions of life they will be apt to implicit theories of leadership and the notions of it are built-in sequences of social settings (Kempster, Cope and Parry, 2010). Insight into the philosophy of implicit leadership theory can be gained through examining relationships of leaders with other organizational members (Kempster, 2009).

Even in instances where an SME has a workforce that joins the budding enterprise that is transforming from an enterprise that is transforming from merely just existing to a thriving organization the leadership landscape may still be one of a leader that displays prototypical implicit theories of leadership, dominating all organizational pronouncements (Kempster and Cope, 2010). However, this should not be the case as is evident in (Ensley, Pearce and Hmieleski, 2006) emphasis that as a business enterprise matures an individual leader carrying out all leadership functions is no longer practical. The implicit theories of leadership are further compounded by the owner-manager who metaphorically takes on a parent-like figure in the SME and further impacts the way they lead and are perceived, the SME context being symbolic of a family unit contributes to the homologous parental figure the owner-manager is seen as by their employees (Kempster and Cope, 2010). Implicit theory appropriateness in the SME context furnishes us with a general outlook of the attributes of the form of leadership that will be preferred (Kempster, Cope and Parry, 2010).

Despite the fact that an antecedent outcome of distributed leadership practice—the enabling of dispersal of tasks which evokes new organizational structures representing core organizational business (Heikka, Waniganayake and Hujala, 2013), there may be failure on the part of the owner-manager to recognize their employees and delegate tasks to them which can have a restraining effect on shared activity in SMEs (Macpherson, Jones and Zhang, 2005). As a result, teething troubles are likely to occur for SMEs to ably apply distributed leadership concepts within their contexts on account of their owner-manager's inadequate know-how of distributed leadership practices as earlier alluded to, they are naturally receptive to prototypical implicit theory of leadership that mirrors a hero (Kempster and Cope, 2010; Cope, Kempster and Parry, 2011). Inevitable requirements for more employees in the SME to be part of operational and strategic management and make decisions and not just it being limited to the owner-manager, presents an inquest for distributed leadership and thus the catch 22 situation arises (Kempster, Cope and Parry, 2010). An owner-manager being the one that set up the SME based on their ambitions will be likely to deter the assumption pooled functions of leadership (Phelps, Adams and Bessant, 2007). In fact, any collaborative managerial roles that emerge in an SME will be indicative of the owner-manager's inclinations and will dictate the manner of operation for the enterprise (Gibb 2009). More inhibitions on distributed leadership practice in the SME may arise in instances where the heroic nature of the owner-manager creates a gravity in a situation where he or she exhibits a propensity to narcissism in dealing with their employees owing to the fact they feel a sense of grandness (Vecchio, 2003).

In effect, SMEs would do well with a model of leadership that is collaborative in the sense that the owner-manager appreciates the competencies that are spread out in the various employees within the SME which can be capitalized on through entrusting employees to work in teams whilst maintaining openness of communication lines between the owner-manager and their employees (Jones and Crompton, 2009). Ensley, Pearce and Hmieleski (2006) propose that the kind of leadership ideal for entrepreneurs is a blended form of leadership that encompasses incessant harmony between a practice of both vertical and collaborative forms of leadership. Gronn (2009) poses a similar argument where he is in support of distributed leadership but in a form where it is blended or what he calls hybrid leadership as it will combine notions of distributed leadership with the notions of heroic leadership practice and refers to it as 'leadership configuration' showing that functional

distributed leadership would work well with combined views of leadership. Whilst an all-important aspect of a compelling effect on organizational relationships to yield the inception of distributed leadership in an entrepreneurial team is a joint presence of trust and mutual respect amongst team members (Kempster, Cope and Parry, 2010).

Ensley et al (2006) assert that a combination of vertical leadership and shared leadership may promote the distribution of leadership in entrepreneurial teams. Ideally what would be beneficial for SMEs looking to have participative leadership practice would be to seek efforts involving the advancing of applying blended leadership practice in entrepreneurship (Kempster, Cope and Parry, 2010).

CONCLUSION

Even though there is more information on distributed leadership being generated through empirical research, the sphere of the knowledge around it is still very limited (Heikka, Waniganayake and Hujala, 2013). The extant literature on distributed leadership is largely descriptive and normative rather than critical (Thorpe, Gold and Lawler, 2011) which itself poses a challenge to fully grasping the concept. Based on the theoretical perspective, by Harris and Spillane (2008) distributed leadership is regarded as a scheme that can be analyzed to enable comprehension of leadership practice in a version where it is observed as the elaborate interactions of leadership actions and not the usual version of leadership whose focus is on roles. However, in as much as distributed leadership is advocated for and regarded as a highly effective form of leadership, it is important to be mindful of its pitfalls (Bennett and Harvey, 2003). One major pitfall is that organizations intending to implement distributed leadership need to be mindful of the fact that undesignated leaders who will arise from time to time as a result of task distribution may not be regarded by their colleagues and hence precautionary measures have to be put in place (Timperley, 2005). This kind of situation in organizations can lead to discordance in matters such as earmarked completion of tasks as well as set timeframes for organizational activities ((Harris, 2009). Organizational strife may arise during distributed leadership practice as putting it into effect may suggest a loosening of leadership boundaries without a prescribing a way of managing these boundaries byways of determining the extent to which the leadership sphere should be widened (Bennett and Harvey, 2003). Woods *et al.*, (2004) only allude to the management of conflict in teams where distributed

leadership is in effect by suggesting it is either managed by a senior leader in the formal leadership structure or managed through deliberations by team members themselves.

Another shortcoming of distributed leadership lies in the visible uncertainty in the theoretical definitions of it and classification of terms denoting it, and as such their subsequent exchangeable use has created skepticism in terms of determining the best term to use in interpreting distributed leadership research findings (Heikka, Waniganayake and Hujala, 2013). Despite views that distributed leadership devises a means of efficient control for organizational functioning (Lakomski, 2005) further lack of explicitness on distributed leadership arises in determining it is purely descriptive or purely normative rendering it as being an eloquent means of framing an organizational understanding of organizational members' participative engagement in organizational activity (Bolden and Petrov, G. & Gosling, 2008). Other authors have gone to the extent of regarding distributed leadership as being an inverse of a depiction of laid out procedures for leadership practice which should not be given much attention owing to its lack of lucidity of for organizational members (Harris *et al.*, 2007). Further discrediting of the distributed leadership concept emerges amongst authors who are of the view that the informally disseminated leadership tasks in a team can have a negative effect on a team and make the team unproductive, explaining why it has been listed as one of the six obstacles to efficiency in teams (Harris *et al.*, 2007). Whilst some authors view distributed leadership as not being universally regarded as a notion that can be applied normatively as most distributed leadership studies focus on investigating the various presentations of how leadership practice is spread out across organizational interactions and scenarios meaning an absence of any sanction of prescriptive approaches for organizations (Timperley, 2005).

Nonetheless, realism in the application of distributed leadership in SME contexts is conceivable on account of the research that has been carried out on distributed leadership by various scholars (Cope, Kempster and Parry, 2011), though it is important to be mindful of the fact that distributed leadership is not a prototype but instead gives insight into ways an organization can reorganize itself for positive changes (Harris and Spillane, 2006). Of more pertinence is the acknowledgement that distributed leadership cannot be held as supreme, neither can it be thought of as being inferior what it is contingent on is the organizational context where distributed leadership is implemented and for what purpose it is being implemented (Harris, 2004). Researchers are now compelled to place

value in observation of teams as the teams will be comprised of individuals with relevant skills and applicable knowledge (Lechlar, 2001) and as such when leadership is distributed amongst the various expertise in an organization it will facilitate learning in the organization provided this is done with an understanding of the available expertise which must be meticulously incorporated into the defined and dispersed leadership undertakings (Heikka, Waniganayake and Hujala, 2013). The widespread documented views on distributed leadership are persuasive but are not entirely indisputable, signifying a need for more research into distributed leadership practice especially in terms of its inhibitive factors before it can be recommended for use in organizations (Harris *et al.*, 2007). Academicians must be encouraged to shift the focus of their research on distributed leadership on aspects of improvements in the current theory as opposed to discussions on autonomous writings of distributed leadership proponent authors (Thorpe, Gold and Lawler, 2011).

CHAPTER THREE:

METHODOLOGY

The previous chapter in form of literature review clarified conceptual issues associated with the form of leadership under investigation in this study - distributed leadership in general and how dimensions of distributed leadership are likely to be applicable to an SME. Distributed leadership activity is resonated in the entrepreneurial leadership field as being significant for engaging everyone in the entrepreneurial team in the enterprise's leadership activity (Ensley, Pearson and Pearce, 2003). Ensley, Pearce and Hmieleski, (2006) declare the SME context as one heavily influenced by the heroic leadership approaches practiced by its owner-managers. However, the ideal would be enabling blended leadership practice through the incorporation of distributed forms of leadership practice into the enterprise leadership activity when specific situations demand for it (Collinson and Collinson, 2009), (Kempster, Cope and Parry, 2010). Practicing the distributed leadership has a bearing on the potential of leading to efficiency in organizational performance (Thorpe, Gold and Lawler, 2011).

This chapter provides an outline of the methodological approaches and research design applied in this study with the aim of determining whether there are any dimensions of distributed leadership in the entrepreneurial leadership landscape of an indigenous Zambian SME, Prompt Spares Limited (PSL). The agenda for this research plan as shown in this chapter has a layout of divergent sections to guide the framework for this qualitative single case study. The sections are as follows: rationale for a qualitative case study, paradigmatic location, research methodology approach, case study participant's selection, instrumentation (semi-structured open-ended interview guide), research questions, collection of data (interviews, focus group discussions, analysis of site documents, and field notes), and analysis of data, limitations, transferability of findings, and ethical considerations.

RATIONALE FOR A QUALITATIVE CASE STUDY

The nature of this study falls in place with the common distinguishable facet of case study research. In instances where a researcher desires to unearth the contextual conditions in a chosen area of study, a case study is appropriate (Yin, 2003). Thus, it appropriately fits the undertaking of the exploration of the kind of distributed leadership practice that is prevalent in the contextual conditions of the SME under study.

The study was highly qualitative based on the premise that qualitative enquiries are interpretive and naturalistic and entail a study of phenomenon in a natural setting (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000). Rightfully the naturalistic and situational context of the SME under study shaped the qualitative inquiry for this single case study that employed an exploratory and descriptive mode of inquiry. The unit of inquiry - a Zambian SME, whose case study results gives a possible indication of the dimensions of distributed leadership that may manifest in Zambian SMEs. A selected case can be given the status of a monumental figure, as it is constitutive of the larger populace, which is greater than the case in study, and in cases where the study depicts a country view it may be interpreted for the region to which the country belongs (Seawright and Gerring, 2008). The researcher's resolve to use a case study as the methodological approach for this study was further influenced by Pearce and Conger (2003) inferences that specifics of the leadership phenomenon as an investigation are better handled using qualitative methods owing to its nature of dynamism and constituents that are symbolic, a nature quantitative methods cannot adequately investigate.

The researcher's interest in this particular area of study stems from a growing interest in the management issues of informal organizations such as SMEs. In the researcher's view, this presents a theme worth noting and warranting further research to aid our understanding of the leadership theorizations of distributed leadership as a phenomenon on its own. More insight is required on distributed leadership practice and its applicability in organizations such as SMEs, in cognizance of the fact that most existing documented research work on distributed leadership represents the educational context whilst other contexts such as the business environments have not been given much consideration for further examination (Thorpe, Gold and Lawler, 2011). Organizational leadership studies have in a similar manner not given much recognition to informal organizations (Jones and Crompton, 2009). Interest in this direction for research was also steered by the growing number of SMEs in the researcher's country of origin, Zambia that are arising out of individual business undertakings. The researcher is curious to see how the emerging leadership views representative of distributed leadership practice are portrayed in an informal organizational setup of an SME. For these reasons, the data collected in this study enabled the researcher to contribute to the analytical literature on distributed leadership practice in informal organizations. The virtues of the case study approach

aided the enabling of qualitative methodology that capacitates in depth examination of cases for reference to real life contexts (Yin, 2003).

Usually, conducting single case studies on a small scale as this allows means for conducting a holistic and empirical inquiry of particular phenomenon within the bounds of a specific context (Merriam, 1998; Stake, 2000) as is the case for this single case study. The researcher relied on the distributed leadership theory to inform aspects of this study in order to allow the findings to emerge in line with the identified themes. Case study methodology facilitates this as it perpetuates the intricate connections between the fundamental values and intent of the study by way of it promoting; exclusive adherence, illustration and heuristic approaches in handling the chosen phenomenon under study (Merriam, 2009).

PARADIGMATIC LOCATION

The constructivist / interpretive research paradigm shaped this qualitative case study. A constructivist or interpretive position provided the researcher with a rational means of checking for validity in the research process (Creswell, J. W. & Miller, 2000). As the researcher sought thorough explanation of the nature of the leadership landscape of the SME under investigation the research paradigm was located in a constructivist/ interpretive paradigm. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007) view constructivist/ interpretive paradigm suitable for the elucidation of a particular case where the objective is to gain understanding of particular conditionality in a social sphere such as this one. Existence of multiple and constructed realities is a conjecture held by constructivists (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). Therefore, the constructivist/ interpretive research paradigm enabled the researcher to observe the dimensions of distributed leadership in the leadership landscape of the SME under study within its context. The constructionist paradigm recognized the fact that reality is inherent in different contexts that will be sensitive to time, location and circumstances. Constructivists suppose that perspectives depicting reality are pluralistic, interpretive, open ended and found in a specific context thereby rendering findings in this study transferable on account of procedure followed by locating this study within this paradigm (Creswell, J. W. & Miller, 2000).

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Observations of this study investigated the phenomenon of distributed leadership within the context of leadership practice of three owner-managers in a Zambian SME. Due to

the nature of the enterprise under research – a small owner managed business entity and it being a localized study; the research was qualitative. The researcher opted for a qualitative study in order to comprehend the leadership practices of the SME managers under study in order to get a representative depiction of the phenomenon under study from data gathered from their responses and the researcher's observations. Qualitative methodology is holistic, interpretive, naturalistic, and contextual as it aims at finding revelations of the uniqueness of the case (Stake, 2000). An exploration of the leadership landscape of the SME required the researcher to consider the subjective nature of leadership as a phenomenon, which is best examined using qualitative research methods that can capture the dynamic multifaceted issues in leadership studies (Conger, 1998).

The qualitative data collected on distributed leadership practice of the SME understudy as depicts it as per its context. This deems the SME instrumental in serving as a specific case to inform this case study (Stake, 1995) thereby enabling the researcher to have comprehensive appreciation of the distributed leadership phenomenon. The researcher endeavored to collect rich content of qualitative data. Cohen et al (2007) describe determinant features of case studies that give richness to reports as: giving prolific and realistic accounts of events in relation to the case; creating a view of analyzed notable events; and having a focus on individuals or groups who can give views to help understand a topic of study.

CASE STUDY PARTICIPANTS' SELECTION

The selection of the SME under study by the researcher was because of it being easily accessible and conveniently within reach. The researcher opted for convenience sampling which, Dörnyei and Griffee, (2010) define as a type of sampling where a sample is selected using nonprobability methods but instead is operationalized based on the target population being easily accessible or within the researcher's geographical vicinity and factors such as readiness of participants to be included in the study.

The total number of the three owner-managers and the four employees fit for interview determined the research sample size. Participants were selected on account of them being where the researcher was collecting their data and they constitute a convenience sample (Etikan, Alkassim and Abubakar, 2016).

The researcher's intention was to interview all three owner-managers but only two were willing. This led to the researcher only interviewing two out of the three owner-managers.

This was despite the researcher rescheduling several interview appointments with the un-interviewed owner-manager he never showed up for any interview appointment and in the end indicated that he felt the other two owner-managers had given the researcher all the information that was necessary. This affected the results of the study as the non-responsive owner-manager may have had views that would have been valuable additions to the research findings. The researcher planned for a focus group discussion for the owner-managers but it never materialized as the owner-managers did not make themselves available for it.

The researcher did however manage to get all the employees together in a focus group discussion via a conference call to Solwezi from Lusaka. The researcher tried to probe further wherever the non-responsive owner-manager came up in the discussion to try to cover up for his non-participation in the survey.

INSTRUMENTATION

A self-designed interview guide was the primary instrument used to collect data for this study. Only the owner-managers had the interview guide administered to them, as the questions focused on the leader aspect of the distributed leadership practice in terms of influence processes. Alshenqeeti (2014) stresses that an interview guide is a prevalent research instrument that allows for illustration and aspects of reflection and critical examination of concepts.

Designing of the self-designed interview guide was based on principles from the literature reviewed on distributed leadership practice in organizations. The aspects the researcher sought to elicit from the case under study were the leadership practices of the owner-managers in relation to the distributed leadership phenomenon. The semi structured interview guide gave the owner-managers a voice; they were interviewed on key issues regarded as being cardinal in the practice of distributed leadership. Analysis of aspects of distributed leadership sought after in the interview guide from a normative perspective is possible based on the literature findings in Chapter 2.

Effective administering of semi structured interviews calls for a protocol of using open-ended questions centred on the prime focus of the study which is generated prior to the interview process for the sole purpose of obtaining specific information which may allow for collation across themes whilst still allowing the researcher to probe further when need arises (DiCicco-Bloom and Crabtree, 2006). The researcher followed the protocol of

open-ended probing during the administering of the semi structured interviews. The researcher's use of open-ended questions in the semi structured interview allowed for resilient probing of respondents where it was deemed as imperative, despite the questions being predetermined, thus indicating depth of investigation of the leadership landscape of the SME under study.

The semi structured interview guide questions were set within the underlying concepts of focal units that Gronn (2000, 2002) identifies, which can be associated with clear-cut work practices depicting distributed leadership. The researcher focused on Gronn (2000, 2002) theorizations of distributed leadership to formulate the sections of semi structured interview guide as the author displays an enlightened conceptual analysis of the variant aspects of the practice and context of the distributed leadership concept. In this analysis, Gronn (2000, 2002) suggests:

- an underlying structure to aid the comprehending of distributed organizational leadership
- categorization of the variant distributed leadership patterns.

The researcher's preparation of the semi structured interview guide was further guided by predetermined categories of work practices in Gronn (2000, 2002) analysis that seek to bring out aspects of distributed leadership. The researcher opted to focus on the SME practices and the owner-manager activity and identify any categorical work practice revealing aspects of distributed leadership. The researcher's resolve to tailor the interview guide for the owner-managers was to enable exploration of leadership practices by the owner-managers and use their responses to get additional information out of the employees to help gain an understanding of the specifics of any noticeable leadership approaches that are indicative of distributed leadership practice in the SME. The researcher set 27 questions in the semi structured interview guide in simple understandable language and categorized then in four sections.

The first section (Section A) contained four questions with the intent of gathering the demographic information of the respondents.

The subsequent sections had questions to help the researcher ascertain prevailing aspects of distributed leadership in the SME under study. The researcher ensured articulation of the questions in line with the objectives of the research. The researcher additionally had

to corroborate the questions formulated in each section had a meaningful order which allowed for smooth administration of the semi structured interview guide.

The second section (SECTION B) was included and influenced by views by Gronn (2002) inferences on the analysis of distributed leadership in organizations being positioned in its systems, departments and formal obligations. Ideally, an organization in its status as an entity evokes replicated patterns of activities by its employees that are embodied by close or distant interactions amongst employees in the organization and these form the roots of an organization's structure (Gronn, 2000). On this basis, this section was comprised of seven questions that elicited responses on aspects of leadership inherent in organizational structure/practice.

The third section (SECTION C) was added to the interview guide on account of Gronn (2000) predisposition on the social dimension of an organization which has a bearing on leadership and is a cardinal feature in distributed leadership. Enactment of distributed leadership through a procedural approach entails acknowledgement of an organization being a mechanism for structural outcomes with recognition of leadership being one of the structural responses to the motions caused by environmental stimuli (Gronn, 2002). Gronn (2002) cites Hosking in referring to further study in to distributed leadership as examining leadership in terms of how it may shape up execution of tasks with a focus on directions or guidance given to employees that can foster organized activity and interrelations. It was on this basis that this section was comprised of five questions on organizational leadership

This section (Section D) was added due to principles of distributed leadership highlighted by Gronn (2002) stating his preference for the phenomenon because it is a form of leadership that describes the forms of leadership distribution and not prescribe. These forms in which leadership may be distributed constantly change as distributed leadership is anchored in actions performed by a team and through these actions the effect of team effort is much greater than an accumulation of an individual's effort (Gronn, 2002; Bennett and Harvey, 2003)

The first principle being Division of labor. Notions of division of labor denote the fulfilment of tasks in totality, in some instances taking into consideration the technological competence one has or uses in order to successfully complete the task (Gronn, 2002)

The next two principles are as per Gronn (2002) depiction of distributed leadership as being leadership actions that one may engage in as a result of “attributed influence”.

Gronn (2002) considers Concerted action, the second principle, as the arrangement of the numerous functions undertaken by a team with a focus on the collaborative effort and not the aggregation of individual acts. Spontaneous collaboration and Intuitive working relations and Institutionalized practices represent forms of Concerted action.

The third principle is numerical action; Gronn (2002) regards it as a form of distributed leadership that allows additions to responsibilities of leadership in a numerical manner. Leadership becomes additive in an organization when aggregated leadership tasks are disseminated amongst organizational members with no particular task being more significant than the other is.

The researcher was of the opinion that questions on the principles of distributed leadership would lead to a description of the form of leadership in the SME under study. Hence, this section had eleven questions probing issues relating to the general overarching principles of distributed leadership.

The different sections of the interview guide all feed into the process of examining the leadership landscape of the SME under study.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The case study methodology equipped the researcher with a distinctive way of answering her research questions. The manner in which case studies centre on configured conceptual design arranged with the intention of answering a few research questions makes its methods suitable for the aims of the study (Stake, 2000). Case study methods guide studies whose focus is on: providing answers for How, Why and What questions; studies that pay particular attention to new-fangled theory; and instances where a researcher’s interest lies in the series of actions that make up the phenomenon under study (Yin, 2003). Qualitative research has a unique means of allowing the researcher to pose questions centred on a phenomenon that the researcher would like to know more of (Janesick, 2003).

In order to answer the questions presented below this study relied on the observational and inquiring data collected from the three owner-managers on how they practice leadership in their enterprise.

The study sought to specifically answer the following questions:

- What notions of distributed leadership actually occur in the leadership landscape of a Zambian SME?
- How do the dimensions of distributed leadership manifest in the Zambian SME context?
- How do emergent dimensions of distributed leadership affect the leadership landscape of the organization?

A case study being an investigation that is conducted in an observational manner to establish theoretical views of a topic as observed in reality (Yin, 2003) enabled the researcher to examine the features of the leadership landscape of the SME under study using the above research questions to determine whether the SME has any identifiable dimensions of distributed leadership.

ALIGNMENT WITH INTERVIEW GUIDE QUESTIONS

How do notions of distributed leadership actually manifest in the leadership landscape of the case organization? Questions 7, 9, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26.

Which dimensions of distributed leadership manifest in the Zambian SME context? Questions 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 23, 24, 25, 26.

How might these emergent dimensions of distributed leadership impact the leadership landscape of the SME? Questions 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 19, 20, 21, 23, 24, 25, 26.

COLLECTION OF DATA

The researcher's intention was to interview all three of the owner-managers but only two were willing. This led to the researcher only interviewing two out of the three owner-managers. This was despite the researcher rescheduling several interview appointments with the un-interviewed owner-manager who never showed up for any interview appointment and in the end indicated that he felt the other two owner-managers had given the researcher all the information that was necessary. This affected the results of the study as the non-responsive owner-manager may have had views that would have been valuable additions to the research findings. The researcher planned for a focus group discussion

for the owner-managers but it never materialized as the owner-managers did not make themselves available for it. In this instance, the Focus group discussion would have been conducted in order to meet the researcher's need to discuss a specific topic that required more insight (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2007).

The data collected from the interview guide provided an initial picture of the SME in terms of forms of practice of distributed leadership. The researcher planned for further exploration of the preliminary data collected through a focus group discussion with the selected employees in operations. The researcher managed to get all the employees together in a focus group discussion via a conference call to Solwezi from Lusaka. The researcher tried to probe further wherever the non-responsive owner-manager came up in the discussion with these employees to try and compensate for his non-participation in the survey.

Responses to the core questions in the interview guide identified a number of issues brought out by the owner-managers that can be associated with distributed leadership. These are summarized as follows:

- Employees' awareness of PSL motto, vision, and mission.
- PSL structures and systems (departments and posts of responsibility).
- Employees' influence and responsibilities.
- Employees' involvement in decision-making.

The focus group discussion conducted for the employees to explore their perceptions of the leadership practice in the SME was in line with the issues identified from the interviews with the SME owner-managers. Administering of focus group discussions is done in instances where the researcher decides to have a specific target group to discuss a particular topic to gain more insight on it and gather more data (Hatch, 2002). The employees that took part in the focus group discussion are involved in the same kind of logistical tasks at both the Lusaka and Solwezi offices. Neuman (2012) proposes having members of same status in a focus group discussion as being beneficial as all will participate when there are no feelings of domination in the group by members who may have higher status. The discussion was conducted via a conference call from Lusaka office to the Solwezi employees during lunchtime. A disadvantage was most responses were coming from the employee who has been with the SME for the longest and he tended to stray from the topic. Despite this, the researcher gathered information from the

employees and the interaction between them was lively. The researcher allowed the conversation to be social as this would help in eliciting the perceptions of the employees (Stewart, Shamdasani and Rook, 2007) and too frequent interruptions would break the narrative offered by the respondents.

It was necessary to be able to frame the research and to devise a range of questions to prompt respondents regarding their perception of the leadership style in the organisation. Among the questions for discussion were:

1. Are you aware of the PSL motto, mission statement or vision?
2. How would you describe the way you perform your day to day duties, Do you wait for instructions from management before you start working?
3. Would you say you understand your role in the operations of PSL?
4. Do you feel you have the autonomy to make decisions as you work?
5. Do you feel they are tasks you are not given an opportunity to perform but you are able to perform?
6. How would you describe your working relationship amongst yourselves as employees?
7. How would you describe our working relationship with the owner-managers?
8. Do you feel like a part of PSL team when working with the owner-managers?

In addition to the discussion brought out by these questions, the employees were asked to surface any of their perceptions regarding leadership roles in the SME that were not brought out by the questions posed by the researcher.

Prompt Spares Limited, the SME under study has; three owner-managers that are brothers. It has been in existence since 2010. It's main line of operation is supply of spare parts for heavy duty vehicles that service the operations of mining activity organizations in the Zambian copper mining sector. It operates two offices in two Zambian towns, Lusaka where the head office is situated and Solwezi where a branch outlet is located. It has a staff of 7 some of whom operate between the two SME locations.

Table 1. 1; List of description of first group of participants

Owner-managers	Educational Qualifications
Owner-manager 1	PhD in Virology
Owner-manager 2	General Certificate of Education

Owner-manager 3	Diploma in Accounting
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Table 1. 2; List of description of second group of participants

Employees	Educational Qualifications
Employee 1	Logistics Management Certificate
Employee 2	National Accounting Technician
Employee 3	Bachelor of Arts Degree in Public Administration
Employee 4	General Certificate of Education

In order to conduct research at the SME under study, the researcher hand delivered a request of participation of the SME in the study in form of a consent form to its owner-managers and employees. A follow-up meeting was arranged where the purpose of the study as given in the consent form to participate in the study was read out to all three owner-managers of the SME. The researcher was granted permission; all the three owner-managers signed the informed consent document in agreement. The researcher received a letter granting her permission. No definite date was set for the interview but it was agreed that prior to their interviews the researcher would send a reminder letter to set dates and times for the interviews.

The researcher was granted permission to be at the premises of the organisation. This permission was sought through a letter addressed to the management of the SME in the month of June 2012 to which she got a response allowing her to begin data collection. The researcher made effort to strategically use the limited time for the study in the best way possible. The researcher had to divide time between the two site offices most time was spent at the Lusaka office with only a week spent in Solwezi (27th August to 1st September 2018). Even though the time was short, the researcher observed the activity in the organisation and took field notes during this time. During this time the researcher could observe how the owner-managers and staff at work as they conducted their daily activities for a few hours a day in the four-week time span spent at the Lusaka head office. The researcher also observed the PSL employees in her time spent at both the PSL outlet and head office.

DATA ANALYSIS PROCESS

Data was analyzed using the inductive steps of categorizing the data into themes and then dividing them according to their meanings. Once these meanings were deduced, the gathered data had to be grouped into a recurring systematic arrangement (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2007). The theorizations of distributed leadership and the defined dimensions of distributed leadership formed the basis for the analysis. The researcher selected themes to outline the issues identified. The researcher further noted the common elements in line with the distributed leadership phenomenon as well as the discordances arising in the collected data for presentation in chapter four. Impetus of using a case study method arises in the data analysis as it allows interpretive findings arising from the identified themes, as a method that allows flexibility through its model of configuration around the case and research questions (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000).

Table 1. 3; Methods of Investigation for Research Questions

Question / Method	How do notions of distributed leadership actually manifest in the leadership landscape of the case organization?	Which dimensions of distributed leadership manifest in the Zambian SME context?	How might these emergent dimensions of distributed leadership impact the leadership landscape?
Researcher field notes	x	x	x
Interviews with owner-managers	x	x	x
Focus Group discussions with owner-managers	N/A	N/A	N/A
Focus group discussions with employees	x	x	x

The collection and analysis of data in this study occurred over a four-month period (July – November 2018). The researcher took descriptive field notes, covering what she noticed during observations, conversations, and interviews. The researcher further took time to re-read her field notes and replay the recorded interviews in order to decipher any meanings and determine whether there would be any need for follow up sessions. The researcher combined insights from respondents and contrived them into a descriptive narrative in line with the categorized themes that she interpreted and coded (Moustakas, 1994).

The data analysis process followed a structure for analysis designed for the build out of findings for this study. Any mode of qualitative data analysis must transform data into findings (Patton, 1990). The researcher's analysis of the data noted any display of distributed leadership practice in the SME under study from the responses given by the respondents and the notes from her observations. The analysis of data followed three concurrent steps the first being organization of the data and the second being reviewing the data and the observational notes and the third and final step which is the categorizing of themes that arise during the analysis and coding (Creswell, 2009). The coding for this study was inductive and took place whilst the researcher examined the data iteratively.

The researcher first presented a synopsis of the major findings in the study and considered a determinant major conclusion for each of the research questions. The researcher then explained the reasons for the occurrences the data presented. All the explanations given by the researcher were based on the conceptual background arising from the literature review and research questions. The researcher made comparisons with existing prior studies with a focus on distributed leadership and indicated whether the interpreted data was in conformity with these studies.

LIMITATIONS

One of the limitations of this study is that the researcher only studied one SME. On the one hand this made a deep-dive possible, but at the cost of the ability to generalise. However, the intention is not so much to generalize, but instead to discover *how* distributed leadership plays itself out in an SME settings. The dynamics of the "how" plays out differently between organisations and the value lies in a richer description of one case than in a shallower comparison among multiple cases. To some degree the choice of the organisation was dictated by convenience, because the researcher simply had easy access. This of course raises the possibility of oversimplification of depicted scenarios, or sensitivity to certain issues, or bias on the part of the researcher as Lincoln and Guba (2000) warn about this type of research.

Another limitation is the fact that one of the three owner-managers declined to participate in the study, however two did participate. This non-participation would not normally be an issue, but since the topic is distributed leadership, the fact that one of the three owners did not want to participate does cast a shadow on the evidence presented by the others as examples of the distributed nature of decision-making in the organisation.

Furthermore, employee participation took place in a group and it might be that some participants with longer experience and more dominant personalities dominated the discussion.

The period for the data collection may also not have been very adequate to cover various aspects that may have arisen during a longer time of engagement and makes up one of the limitations of the study.

TRANSFERABILITY OF FINDINGS

The fact that this study was conducted at a single site it may not yield the reliability that must come out of a research study. The researcher however relied on validation techniques that Creswell, J. W. & Miller (2000) cite as being suited for validation where the researchers employed the constructivist/interpretive paradigm as this was the identified paradigm for this study. Validation was a cardinal process for the researcher to undertake, as a qualitative study must have elements of trustworthiness to promote the validity of the study and the trustworthiness of explanations in the study (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). Two standpoints directed the steps toward validity procedures for of the study: the researchers chosen lens and their research paradigm assumption (Creswell, J. W. & Miller, 2000).

Creswell, J. W. & Miller (2000) propose prolonged engagement as a lens of study participants that can be purposefully used to gain credibility in a study as this process' resolute is to provide a credible narrative by putting up a strong and comprehensive case. The process requires the researcher to examine their qualitative data repeatedly to assess if the themes, accounts and interpretations are logical (Patton, 1990). The researcher ascertained the duration of engagement in the field and decided the point of data saturation in order to have well-organized themes as well as the transformation of the data after analysis in to convincing account (Creswell, J. W. & Miller, 2000). The researcher gained trust of the participants through repeated observation, which made them comfortable to disclose information. The researcher capitalized on time spent in the field to solidify the evidence of gathered data by checking the data through comparisons between the interview data and the observational data. The researcher used the constructivist approach of relying on the recognition of the fact that respondents give pluralistic responses giving a better context for understanding of their views through the prolonged engagement in the field (Creswell, J. W. & Miller, 2000).

Another validity approach under the constructivism approach the researcher used was, use of their own lens. It involved the application of a data analysis process that is not heavily methodical but based on the examination of different aspects in a categorization as reality presents as complicated and multitudinous in nature (Creswell, J. W. & Miller, 2000). The researcher checked for internal validity using procedure similar to data triangulation but known as disconfirming. The procedure demands setting precursory classification in line with the topic under study, followed by sifting through the gathered data for any substantiation that confirms or disconfirms these classes (Creswell, J. W. & Miller, 2000). By sifting through multiple views of data, the researcher raised the internal validity of the study by showing how the multiple views revealed similar concluding elements thereby presenting a holistic view of the study (Crowe *et al.*, 2011).

The use of rich and thick descriptions helped achieve external validity for this study. The design methods of a case study bring about accounts with bountiful descriptions and information is insightful (Yin, 2003). This procedure establishes credibility through description in rich detail inherent in qualitative study- settings, participants and themes (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000). The researcher used this process to establish validity through the lens of readers outside the research by utilizing the constructivist perspective to place the respondents and study site into context. The rich and thick description facilitates the creation of naturalism to stimulate a feeling readers may liken as being close to an experience of the descriptions in the study (Creswell, J. W. & Miller, 2000). The researcher aimed at vividly describing their findings in order to capacitate the applicability of their findings to settings of similar contexts, in so doing making their account credible. The descriptions of pieces from interactions; pinpointing respondents in situations worth noting; or giving a detailed account of how one respondent may have given their perceptions on a subject helped achieve this (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000).

ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The researcher sought permission from the information custodians (owner-managers of the SME). Management of the SME under study granted written permission to the researcher (see Appendix). Participation in this study involved minimal risks to the case study participants. In addition, the participants gave their informed consent to participate willingly in the study and could withdraw their participation at any time. (In fact, one of the owner managers declined to participate, citing a lack of time).

The Stellenbosch University REC granted the researcher ethical clearance to conduct the research.

The researcher ensured explanation of the subject phenomenon behind the case study to give respondents the significance of the research. The researcher assured the employees who took part in the FGD of anonymity and further informed them that the information they furnish would be treated with the highest degree of confidentiality and they would not be victimized in any way.

CONCLUSION

A significant feature of a case study is that it renders explicit methodology useful for exploring an issue to a point where one can attain a depth of understanding (Merriam, 2009). This case study format provided a means of developing interpretations of the study findings from the rich narratives of the data collected (Stake, 2000). The next chapter will present the findings of the case study according to the analyzed data.

CHAPTER FOUR:

ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the findings of this single case study in providing a contextual depiction of the leadership activity of the SME under study, PSL in terms of displaying any form of distributed leadership practice. In order to understand the outcome of this case study's through an in-depth investigation of the PSL distributed leadership landscape, it is necessary to describe the nature and function of leadership activity that takes place within this enterprise by examining how roles and responsibilities are divided amongst members of the enterprise or conjointly performed with a consideration of how all this activity revolves around members of the enterprise given the social and environmental context of the enterprise (Woods, 2004). The information presented in these findings has been drawn from the respondents' interview data collected, researcher's observational notes and SME existing documents. All respondents targeted for this single case study were interviewed except for Owner-manager Two who declined to allow the researcher an opportunity to conduct an interview. It should be mentioned that all respondents had no prior knowledge of the concept of distributed leadership.

The data analysis process used the content analysis methodology. Codes were assigned to the emerging variables of the theory under investigation. The presentation of the findings for this single case study is according to the themes that emerged as the data was being analysed in the researcher's attempt to answer the research questions. The nature of the questions in the semi-structured interview guide prompted responses that overlap with each other into giving insight into the set research questions for this single case study and hence the use of the emergent themes to present the findings.

THEME ONE: ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE

Organizational structure as per the context of these findings is with regards to the established leadership practice of PSL. It is representative of the inter-organizational practices that portray shared enterprise features that are common to everyone in the

enterprise and depict professional work performed by everyone in the organization (Lambert, 2002).

Observations of the leadership practice of PSL reveal that the SME has a form of the matrix management system on a small scale. Three owner-managers make up the management of PSL and none of them have formal training in business management. The owner-managers are brothers and they set up PSL for profit-making purposes. They have all had prior experience of working in their mother's car spares shop when they were younger. The owner-managers' ages and educational background is as shown in the table below:

Table 2. 1; Owner-manager's Ages and Educational Background

PSL OWNER-MANAGER	AGE	EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND
Owner-manager One	40	Doctor of Philosophy in Virology
Owner-manager Two	43	General Certificate of Education
Owner-manager Three	38	Diploma in Accounting

The managers of PSL have clearly defined roles entailing that the leadership activity of management of PSL is shared. These roles have been identified and are explicitly shared amongst the three owner-managers and precisely for Owner-manager two and Owner-manager three who have major roles at PSL and work at the enterprise full time. Owner-manager two is in charge of logistics and finance whilst owner-manager three is in charge of sales and marketing. Owner-manager one has a very silent role as he is in full-time formal employment and therefore only comes in when there are administrative issues such as employee disputes or business meetings with prospective clients and existing clients.

Owner-manager One

“The way we manage our enterprise through the identified roles for ourselves as the owner-managers symbolizes a strategic move that has helped us in the smooth running of our affairs.”

Owner-manager Three:

“As we are the initiators of this enterprise everything revolves around the three of us it starts from the top and then goes down to the employees depending on the need of the role to be shared. Our business is basically straightforward and really

the way we have shared out the roles things basically run smoothly and we really have no need for any more people.”

The views given by the owner-managers indicate a structured management team that was created for ensuring specific roles are assigned to everyone thereby generating agreed ways of working towards the objectives of PSL.

The four employees of PSL have all been serving the enterprise for more than two years, with the longest-serving one the employees at the Solwezi outlet having been with the enterprise since its inception. All the employees have at least a minimum of General Certificate of Education as their educational attainment, with one being a holder of a Bachelor of Arts in Public Administration. The two employees, Employee one and Employee two, are based at the PSL Solwezi outlet are referred to as managers of the outlet. The other two employees, Employee three and Employee four, are based at the Lusaka head office are referred to as Administrative assistant and Logistics assistant respectively. All the employees work in coordination with one another and the owner-managers to get the enterprise’s tasks done. There appeared to be no work practices to suggest any of the PSL employees working under each other as all their duties are handled as a team effort with none of them giving instructions to the other. Instructions for the employees in the PSL entrepreneurial set up appeared to only come from the owner-managers after which specific tasks for a particular instruction were handled as a collaborative effort by the employees.

It was observed that the work practices of the PSL team are flexible and the manner of execution was dependent on the demands of the task at hand. How all the employees adapt their working modes to suit the needs of the enterprise for a particular time which entails working with the different owner-managers at given times revealed a working practice that is indicative of network kind of structure operating in a matrix organisational form.

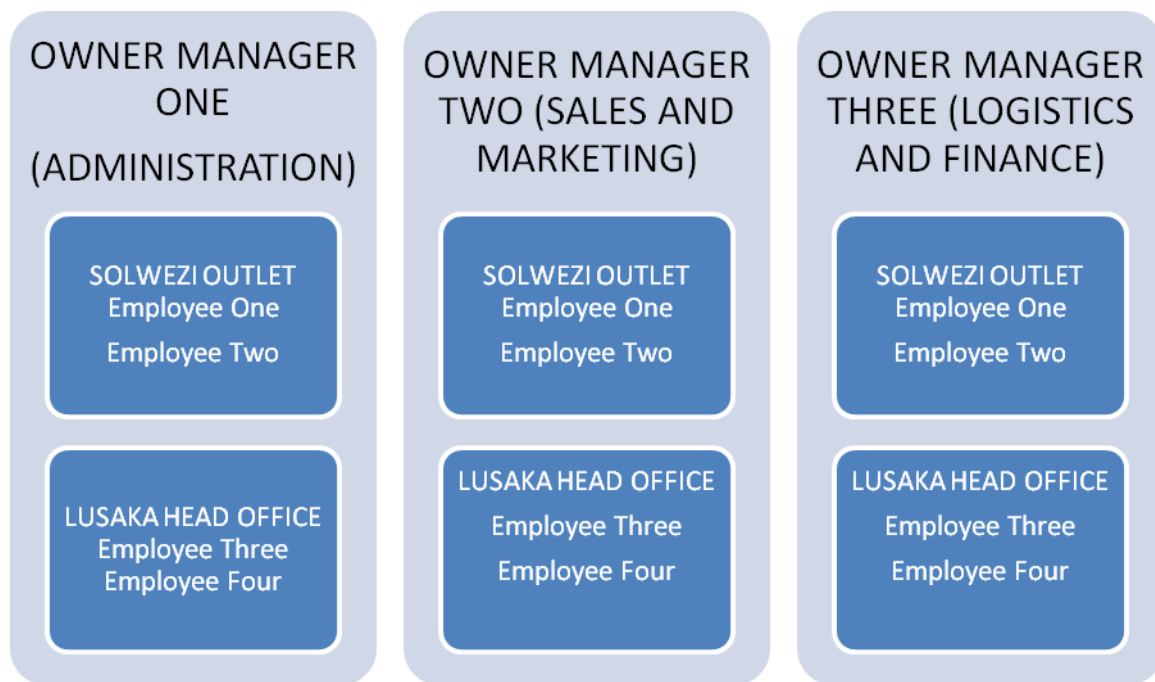


Figure 3; PSL Matrix Organisational Structure

The matrix organizational structure of the SME in the figure above shows that there are three reporting lines for the employees meaning that the employees can work under any one of the owner-managers. The employees are expected to be able to perform tasks dependent on which manager their task falls under and they report to the owner-manager responsible for whichever task it is they are performing. The employee roles are cross-cutting across the SME divisions and their daily workload depends on the task at hand.

The findings revealed the absence of a properly documented vision and mission statement to serve as a guide for all the members of the enterprise to give more definition to their already functioning organizational structure.

Owner-manager three:

“We do not have anything in terms of a vision or mission statement written down. We share different ideas verbally based on our vision amongst ourselves when we meet as the owner management team. We do have a shared vision of where we want to be as an enterprise in the near future, we usually discuss as the three owner-managers how we want to be at the level of big companies such as Toyota Zambia.”

The views given by owner-manager three are in line with the informal practices that are characteristic of SMEs owing to their undertakings being done through informal organizational setups.

In terms of documented organizational value or purpose documents, it was observed that PSL has a company profile which is used as a marketing tool for prospective clients by owner-manager three, who frequently changes the contents of the profile to suit the needs of the client being targeted. Not all the employees are aware of the company profile despite it containing some information about the vision and mission of PSL. PSL has an official Facebook page which is managed by owner-manager three and a website. These give PSL its online presence as the sources of promotional documented information about the PSL services and scope of operation. All the employees were aware of the PSL motto – “Keeping you moving”, although one of them did not give the exact wording of the motto correctly. When the employees were asked whether they were aware of the PSL vision and mission statement one of them gave the motto as what they felt was a mission statement, but one was able to recall what the prompt vision is. It was observed that the motto is a common feature on all the branded products that were within the PSL premises such as the vehicles, signage billboards, calendars, and diaries, as well as shirts worn by the owner-managers and employees.

Owner-manager One

“We do have some kind of mission statement and vision that can be found in our company profile. The company profile is really important as it provides information on the scope of our services and it tells one on how these services can be accessed. Employees are supposed to be oriented on the company profile by owner-manager two when they just join the enterprise. This company profile is kept in both soft copy and hard copy and it is readily available to key employees with whom it is readily shared with, they can easily attach it in emails and send it to prospective clients. We also have a company website and a Facebook Page.”

Owner-manager Three:

“The employees especially those heavily involved in sales are expected to know what basic information is in the company profile as it sells who we are it is readily accessible and they can get to it without even having to consult me. Our company profile has information that revolves around our core business, basically

information on parts for light vehicles, heavy-duty vehicles and mining equipment and non-vehicle parts – red dye. The employees rarely even refer to it though as I handle most matters that require handing out of the company profile as I am the one who sources all major orders so I do all the groundwork in terms of trying to get the mines to order some supplies from us.”

“I wouldn’t really say the company profile is cardinal for our continued existence as our regular clients are already aware of what we supply and we know that for certain things the mines would rather order direct from dealers of those products. It only becomes useful in rare instances when the purchasing teams of the mine have new people working there only then do we send them the company profile. The different sections of the mine have different buyers and even when they are reshuffled, they are sometimes expected to consult the vendors’ list which we are on to check for who supplies what. As for the Facebook page, I was the one managing it but it does not really help us in terms of getting good business as our major clients the mines do not use things such as Facebook to look for suppliers of their spare parts/goods.”

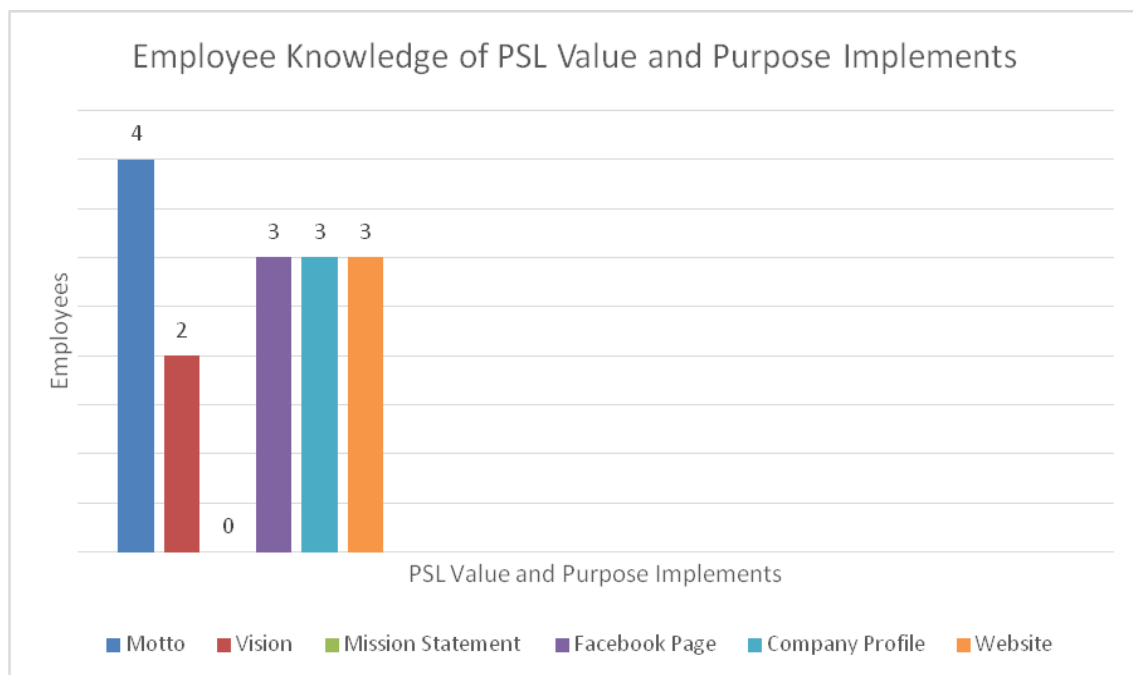


Figure 4; Employee Knowledge of PSL Value and Purpose Implements

The depiction of the employee knowledge on the PSL value and purpose elements portrays a lot of emphasis on the motto in the PSL operations. The employees all related to it as being the driving force of their operations but hand in hand with the word Prompt

in the name of the enterprise. All employees alluded to how the owner-managers emphasized on everyone playing their part to ensure that service delivery to clients was promptly effected to keep the mines running and fit in with their enterprise motto. The absolute lack of knowledge of the PSL mission statement raises indicates that very little attention is paid to it despite owner-manager one declaring the importance of the company profile for PSL which is said to have the information on the mission statement.

SUBTHEMES

The data analysis under the theme organizational structure led to the identification of three subthemes; Organizational Roles and Responsibilities, Organizational Systems, and Organizational Practices as falling under the major theme, Theme One - Organizational structure. These three subthemes resonate with views of Spillane, Halverson and Diamond (2004) that there is interdependency between individuals in an organization and the environmental conditions of their organizations which portrays how their activity is spread out amongst them collectively given the situational conditions of their organization.

Subtheme: organizational roles and responsibilities

The case study findings reveal that sharing of roles and responsibilities in PSL is dependent on the core purpose of the enterprise which is to supply spare parts to the mining companies.

Firstly, the division of roles amongst the three owner-managers helps in the efficient management of PSL in line with their business mandate.

Owner-manager One

“The major roles in our enterprise are shared amongst the three of us. Each owner-manager has a unique skill set and the strength of our business lies in these skill sets.”

Owner Manager Three:

“We try to strictly stick to our roles as owner-managers and avoid overlapping in each other’s areas of operation. Usually when we have to make a decision as management the final say of the owner-manager concerning that area usually

carries the final decision. For instance, I will give two scenarios to show how we make decisions based on our defined roles;

Scenario One: When we are dealing with issues of provisional tax we have to come up with a decision collectively on how much we should pay but the final decision will be made by owner-manager two as he deals with the tax issues and he will justify why we have to go with his decision.

Scenario Two: When it comes to issues of sourcing our supplies, I make the decisions as I am the one who is conversant with all the ways of minimizing costs on our goods sourced, I may choose to go with a source from Turkey as opposed to Dubai and I will give the other owner-managers a justification for my decision and it will be upheld.”

These views of the two owner-managers are a depiction of the clear cut roles of the owner-managers of PSL and how they have used these roles to capitalize on their different expertise in order to effectively run their enterprise.

There was a general feeling amongst the employees that the employee welfare is not really sufficiently taken care of by Owner-manager One owing to his busy schedule, there have been instances where employee disputes could not be handled immediately due to the fact that he had travelled out of the country and therefore was unavailable. The employees however expressed satisfaction with the way their disputes/ conflicts have been resolved by Owner-manager One.

Observation of the PSL employee's roles and responsibilities reveal that even though there may be overlaps, each employee has a general idea of what their major role in the enterprise is especially the two employees based at the Solwezi outlet who are in charge of all operations at the outlet level. One employee cited their extensive years of experience in the automotive industry as being a reason for them knowing their roles and being aware of their responsibilities. Another employee, however, expressed desire of having more challenging roles as they felt their current roles were centred on basic routine activity. On the other hand, the rest of the employees held similar views that their current roles were adequate for them and manageable.

Subtheme: organizational systems

Findings indicate that PSL has some systems in place that help in the execution of the day to day routine tasks. The simplicity of their operations has not given rise to the need for documentation of any procedures. Any special procedures that the employees follow during task execution they have learnt on the job.

Given the nature of the PSL main line of operation, which is the supply of spare parts, it is a requirement for everyone in the enterprise to be conversant with the different kinds of spare parts and their respective spare part numbers. This further entails being conversant with what is known as the Toyota Program which is online based and is frequently referred to when handling queries from customers. Findings implied all the owner-managers are conversant with the use of the Toyota program. The two Lusaka based employees were not aware of Toyota program perhaps since they work very closely with the owner managers, whilst the two Solwezi based employees proved to be fully conversant with it owing to how they work independently most of the time.

All employees are expected to be conversant with Zambia Environmental Management Agency (ZEMA) regulations, International Air Transport Association (IATA) airline courier regulations which stipulate specific ways of packaging goods for shipments. This kind of knowledge is important for instances when: the company supplies red dye for use in the mines and sometimes engages people to replace parts on engines which may entail moving engines from one place to another and therefore every member of PSL must be conversant with the stipulations from ZEMA when handling these things and spare parts are being transported by air from Lusaka to Solwezi, fragile parts must be properly packaged and clearly labelled as “FRAGILE”. Observations indicated everyone in PSL had sufficient general knowledge on the ZEMA and IATA regulations for the handling of the various goods and services they supply and deliver respectively.

Subtheme: organizational practices

It is evident that the boundaries of decision making by the management of the SME are not open. Only the three owner-managers are involved in the critical decision-making process and the employees are not counted as being part of the consultative process when making these critical decisions.

Owner-manager One:

“Only the three owner-managers make all the major decisions. The employees are only consulted from time to time and only when it is relevant.”

Owner-manager Three:

“All discussions are held just between the three of us reason being that we need to keep a tight lid on our business matters in terms of our sources and pricing. These employees are potential competitors and if they have too much information, they may start stealing clients or open an outfit secretly and be running a business parallel to ours.”

“All Budgets and finance issues are strictly a reserve for the three owner-managers. I feel the employees would not understand where we want to go with the business. We had a very bad experience with a past accountant we gave him too much autonomy and he was not paying taxes but using the money for his personal gain and it affected us badly as we had to pay overdue taxes with fines included. This has even made us even become stricter with who we share information with in terms of the employees.”

The views above given by the owner-managers are a representation of an overarching control in the form of the top management team of the owner-managers in the PSL enterprise structure.

However, findings revealed that some of the employees felt they could be included in some of the decision-making processes that are strictly the reserve of the owner-managers. They felt they would welcome the challenge of having to deal with work that is at a higher level than what they are allowed to do.

The findings indicated some presence of management making an effort to motivate and employees and to make them feel part of the PSL enterprise. There was also evidence of deliberate moves to have the employees freely engage with one of the owner-managers.

Owner-manager Three:

“We make effort to ensure that they are comfortable. Once in a while we give them bonuses out of the blue. I feel the best motivation for anyone is money and so we give them money. Even when we feel we have recorded high sales in a certain month we give them bonuses to show we appreciate their efforts. Usually I am the one who deals with the staff one on one so I have to justify why I feel

they should be paid extra. At times just by personally engaging with them you can sense they may have some low morale and where I can probe I do and try to motivate them somehow. I believe in having a happy staff and when they are happy things work well.”

“I try to keep our interactions at an informal level so that they find me approachable. I have a WhatsApp group where we chat not only on work related matters but also just non work-related chats. I also believe letting them make decisions independently makes them feel appreciated.”

THEME TWO: EMPOWERMENT OF EMPLOYEES

This theme – empowerment of employees as employed in these findings evokes the views of it being constitutive of distributed leadership practice as it entails employers entrusting their employees with the power to make decisions independently (Camburn & Han, 2009).

As per the findings of this single case study, the employees of PSL have been empowered with decision-making capabilities. This is employee empowerment is evident in PSL as the owner-managers believe in giving all the employees space within which they must freely work without being micromanaged.

Owner-manager One:

“We expect all our employees to be able to work independently with very little instances of them having to consult any one of us. Although, when the employees consult us and it is mostly the Solwezi outlet employees consulting over discount to give to customers as they have an allowable amount which is 5% but there may be instances where they may feel they want to give more discount then they need to check with management first.”

Owner-manager Three:

“For all our employees especially the Solwezi branch employees who work independently throughout as we are rarely ever there, we encourage them to find workable ways of working together without us being fully involved. We believe allowing them to make decisions on their own makes them feel appreciated. In the case of the Solwezi branch employees, we used to have to deal with their petty arguments in the past and they would call at each moment they needed to make a

decision but now we try to discourage the constant calling of Lusaka office and we have indicated to them that all we are interested in is seeing that the Solwezi branch office runs smoothly and as a result we try to encourage them to listen and take each other's opinions into account and appreciate each other's ideas."

It was observed that the PSL employees all felt that they are given a lot of room to work freely and independent of any of the owner-managers' influence and instead use their discretion to make decisions. The Solwezi outlet employees indicated that the way they have been entrusted with running all the affairs of the Solwezi outlet makes them feel empowered and a part of the PSL team. The employees expressed that at times where they are performing tasks that do not require a collaborative effort they receive instructions via the phone and there will be very little contact with the owner-managers.

SUBTHEMES

The data analysis under the theme empowerment of employees affected the identification of two subthemes; autonomy of employees and delegation of duties to employees as falling under the major theme, Theme Two: Empowerment of Employees. These two subthemes reverberate with the view that the way organizational heads restrain or permit their employees to be resourceful and use their ingenuity is a preserve of distributed leadership practice (Woods *et al.*, 2004).

Subtheme: autonomy of employees

Findings indicate that the employees of PSL have been granted influence by their employers in that their decision-making capabilities are not highly restricted. This seemed to be very apparent for the Solwezi branch employees who have been given the liberty to make decisions without prior approval of PSL management.

Owner-manager One:

"When it comes to logistical issues of either collection or delivery of goods, our employees usually work with minimum consultation, they are allowed to use their discretion especially during their delivery errands as they understand the procedures better than we do."

Owner-manager Three:

“We have instances where government ministry departments in Solwezi make purchases directly from our Solwezi outlet. We have allowed our employees manning the outlet to use their discretion and handle them without having to go through us, to a point where they have even given them goods on credit on condition that they are sure they dealing with someone who is trustworthy.”

The views above that the owner-managers hold demonstrate that autonomy of employees is a feature of the management practices of PSL management.

The employees all shared feelings of having autonomy as they work. The Solwezi outlet team pointed out that there is a lot of core activity that is at outlet level which they indicated they handle on their own as they have been given the autonomy to do so, to an extent where if they have to; source some supplies for the mines locally in order to promptly meet the demand or issue spare parts on credit to government ministry departments that need to have their vehicles running for provincial level activities but cannot pay immediately due to the delays that arise in following government procedures they are free to make such decisions.

Subtheme: delegation of authority

The findings indicate that there is a delegation of authority by the PSL management team to the Solwezi outlet employees to carry out business undertakings in the name of the enterprise but this is just for the execution of outlet level tasks as all major decisions are made in Lusaka by the management team of owner-managers. Observations revealed very little instances of delegation of other major tasks or undertakings to the employees. The general practice is major issues surrounding the business operations of PSL are the reserve of the owner-managers.

It was observed that special delivery of goods being transferred from Lusaka to Solwezi (as all goods are received as consignments through Lusaka International Airport) management prefers that it be handled by an owner-manager, employees will only be called upon when none of the owner-managers is available to travel.

Owner-manager One:

“For instance, a P1 order (priority order) is an urgent order and when we have an order like that employees are called upon and may be expected to travel

immediately but this is only in situations where none of the owner-managers is available to handle the requirements for a P1 order.”

The views above given by one of the owner-managers illustrates that the owner-managers are always involved in all the major undertakings of the enterprise and want to have full control of the handling of these tasks.

The employees’ feelings did not reveal any discontentment with the way the PSL management handle the affairs of the enterprise. They expressed satisfaction with the way things are handled and gave views of the owner-managers’ ways of doing things as being a functional component of the whole PSL team which they felt part and parcel of. One Lusaka employee was able to recount having only been delegated to handle a P1 order and take goods from Lusaka to Solwezi only once.

THEME THREE: CO-PERFORMED ACTIVITY

The implication of this theme of co-performed activity is to show how organizational activity in an organization with distributed leadership is anchored on interdependency amongst the organizational members as they engage in their various organizational tasks and take up their responsibilities (Harris 2004).

The interviews reveal that there is co-performance of tasks in PSL. It was observed that even though the nature of the orders that PSL receive for goods from the mining companies may vary from time to time, the operations within PSL were routine work and as such every person is conversant with what is expected of them in their role in order to meet the demands of their clients.

Owner-manager One:

“We are a very small enterprise and therefore there is very little red tape. This means most decisions have to be made in real time and as such every employee involved in a role meant to fulfil a task is expected to take up a leading role and use their discretion when required to.”

Owner-manager Three:

“Basically our operations are more or less routine and become straightforward for anyone who has been a member of our enterprise for a prolonged period. For instance, one of our routine tasks is counting the goods and checking for corresponding part numbers, checking the orders and then delivering and these

are basic things that all of us can do. Execution of this task is always a team effort which requires counting of goods received, checking the orders and preparing delivery notes and it can be quite tedious at times as it may involve up to even 300 kg of goods that has to be delivered to different clients.”

The above views of the owner-managers depict the presence of a team spirit in the PSL enterprise where everyone is conversant with the routine activities and plays their part whenever they are required to.

All the PSL employees thought they worked well as an entrepreneurial team with very few instances of minor misunderstandings amongst themselves.

SUBTHEMES

The analysis of data under the theme co-performed activity gave rise to the identification of three subthemes; collaborative activity, collective activity and coordinated activity as being classes under it. These three subthemes resonate with views on the structurally controlled concerted activity towards task fulfilment of members of an organization (Gronn, 2000)

Subtheme: collaborative activity

The PSL enterprise activity is performed as an entrepreneurial team. Observations reveal that there is no emphasis on how much one member of the enterprise contributes to a task at hand, the ultimate goal is always to deliver a service to clients.

Owner-manager One:

“Each member of the enterprise has a specific task that they do at a given time of need in our enterprise operations. I can refer to the team as the Prompt Spares engine that is continuously in motion owing to the functioning of the different parts – the members of the enterprise. The individual members of the enterprise perform specific tasks that fit into this engine- our organization and keep it moving.”

Owner-manager Three:

“We as the owner-managers have reached a point where we feel we equally have to tolerate each other and equally respect opinions of one another. This has helped

us in having smoother operations as we don't spend too much time arguing when a decision has to be made"

"I may consult the employees from time to time, especially the Solwezi employees just to enquire on stock levels. There are times when I ask them questions on stock even when I know what we have in stock just so I can keep an eye on them and ensure that they are not using our stock for their personal gain."

The views given by the owner-managers above show how everyone in the PSL entrepreneurial team uses their skill and expertise to keep the enterprise running and management fully recognize this, but the owner-managers still try to keep an upper hand in the running affairs of the enterprise.

The employees regard the ways in which they work as being a good way of working as it creates a good working environment due to the fact that each employee knows their work and performs it well. The employees from the Lusaka head office expressed satisfaction with the times they had to perform tasks hand in hand with any of the owner-managers each time such situations arose.

Subtheme: collective activity

Findings showed that the collective distribution of leadership activity is evidently a feature of the PSL leadership activity. The PSL Solwezi branch was opened in 2014 and it has been managed solely by Employee 1 and Employee 2 from the time of its inception under remotely issued instructions from the owner-managers in Lusaka. The Owner-managers, Employee 1 and Employee 2 run the PSL Solwezi branch collectively.

The employees at the Solwezi outlet described their day to day activity as being characterized by what they called a 'double lane', this was so as they work both under instruction from the Lusaka head office owner-managers and under their own influence but the main thing they keep in mind is to prioritize tasks for the day and what is given priority is meeting requirements of the mines.

Subtheme: coordinated activity

The interviews pointed out that there is coordinated activity in the PSL work activity. The nature of most of the activity in PSL must be performed in a sequence before the whole task can be fulfilled. There were several narrations of how tasks are handled by the PSL

entrepreneurial team through a sequence of specific roles being taken up by different members of the enterprise.

Owner-manager Three:

“My day starts as early as 07 30, my planning of tasks is contingent on the emails from the mines that we will have received. These emails, as well as any pending tasks from previous emails, will dictate the updates that need to be sent to the PSL team - owner-managers as well as the employees on the mailing system as they all need information on; new orders and the status of goods for pending orders. This is what guides what the nature of our tasks for the day will be and specific assignments if need arises are given to different members of our team depending on the nature of the task. I additionally have to give constant feedback in terms of quotations, estimated delivery time for goods they may be expecting to the mining team as they need this information to help them plan their work and feed this into their reports.”

“When we have a situation where a customer decides that they have to return some goods for one reason or another we need to investigate before we give in. This is a business and we are not just going to issue a refund without a thorough investigation. So when such a situation arises we instruct anyone from the Solwezi outlet to go on-site and depending on the nature of the investigation if it is highly technical the gentleman is requested to go as he has some technical knowledge and if it is highly specialized he may have to find someone who has the special technical knowledge to accompany him. Their task would be to determine whether the complaint this person has raised for the goods is genuine or maybe it is just a case of them having found the same good cheaper elsewhere and they are just trying to return the goods and go for a cheaper source in these instances we do not issue any refunds. In instances where we have verified and proved that goods are faulty and our clients are not willing to exchange the goods for functioning ones we have no choice but to issue a refund and then we take it up with our suppliers”

The sentiments above given by one of the owner-managers depicts instances where a sequence of activity is required in some PSL undertakings, it shows the presence of coordination in the enterprise.

The employees expressed their willingness to fit into all roles they were asked to perform. One of the Solwezi outlet employees brought out how they make personal sacrifices at times when they have to receive goods from transporters out of their normal working hours as at times it has to be late at night or in the very early hours of the morning but they have to do it as this is one in the sequence of activities which will ensure goods are delivered on time to the PSL clients.

THEME FOUR: TASK DIFFERENTIATION

The inference of the theme task differentiation in depicting the findings of this single case study is inherent in the manner in which tasks are divided amongst organizational members in organizations concerning how the tasks are fragmented for the overarching task to be completed (Gronn 2002)

The interviews indicated the presence of task differentiation in PSL work activity as the major tasks that will facilitate the meeting of the enterprise's goals have been identified and the strengths and competencies of everyone in the enterprise are capitalized on during fulfilment of this work activity.

Owner-manager One:

“When we have situations arising where shipments are delayed usually everyone has to step in one way or another and everyone is called upon given roles and responsibilities that will expedite a delivery process, this is important as we have to try and overcome the effects of this delay and ensure that goods are delivered to customers in good time.”

The quote above of the owner-manager highlights the instances in which PSL management must adjust employees' usual roles to optimize task fulfilment.

The PSL employees held the view that they had no problem with their roles changing as certain times they are called upon to have to perform tasks they don't usually perform. They all had the general sentiment that even when their roles were changed the only expectation from the owner-managers was to see results and hence they always strive for result orientation every time they are assigned to do something. The employee who has served the least amount of time with PSL indicated that he learnt new things each time he was asked to perform tasks that were divergent from his usual tasks.

SUBTHEME

Analysis of data under the theme four, Task Differentiation, gave rise to a subtheme, Task Specialization. This subtheme is derived from Gronn (2002) who holds that the multiple nature of tasks in an organization due to impositions of its external environment, technical expertise in task differentiation becomes a requirement.

Subtheme: task specialization

The findings revealed that there was a presence of specialized tasks in the PSL enterprise that have been necessitated by compliance requirements of the external environment of the enterprise.

Owner-manager One:

“Those employees that are involved in deliveries to the mines are trained by the mine establishments as they are expected to have knowledge on things such as manufacturers’ specifications for handling transportation of mine goods.”

“Certain things such as engines have to be kept in specific ways and hence specialist training is required. They are also expected to be conversant with the environmental laws on matters such as disposal of engine oils.”

“Employees are required to have skills such as the use of the internet as they may need to get some procedure manuals online from time to time.”

The above quotes from one of the owner managers indicate a reliance on technical competencies, expert skills and knowledge in some of the tasks that make up the PSL enterprise activity.

CONCLUSION

This chapter focused on the findings from the analysis of the data generated from the semi-structured interviews of the PSL owner-managers, the focus group discussion with the employees and the information gathered in the researcher’s observational notes in examining the distributed leadership landscape and the prevalent dimensions of distributed leadership that are likely to manifest in an SME setting. The findings were presented as per the emergent themes and subthemes in line with distributed leadership concepts and resultant of the data analysis process in order to give a profuse account of the findings.

The next chapter brings forward the discussion of the findings just presented, using the constructs of analytical dualism (Woods *et al.*, 2004) and the study's theoretical framework of activity theory. The discussion will be structured around the themes and subthemes from the theory.

CHAPTER FIVE:

DISCUSSION

INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the interpretations of the case study research findings and the discussion of these findings. The interpretations, as well as the discussion of the findings, are given with the aim to illustrate the meanings behind the findings of the PSL case study concerning the objectives of this single case study. The research questions for this case study will be handled consecutively towards the end of the discussion.

These interpretations and discussions of the findings of distributed leadership practice in PSL portray how the constructs of analytical dualism render views that the structure and agency of organizations each have distinguishable effects but are always in constant interaction rendering them requiring analysis of them as distinct entities in combination of each other (Woods *et al.*, 2004). Analytical dualism with respect to distributed leadership holds that both structure and agency should be considered when analysing organisations. For instance, employee autonomy might be seen as a structural feature in an organisation, but it can also result from employee agency, i.e. active participation in leadership tasks.

Discussing the PSL findings from an angle of analytical dualism brings to the fore the necessity of recognizing the structural and agential proportions of distributed leadership and how they associate with one another in the leadership activity of PSL (Woods *et al.*, 2004). The theoretical framework for this study activity theory is of reference in the analysis of the PSL leadership activity as what is revealed is how the PSL environment context influences the PSL members' social interactions and collaborative activity in line with Spillane et al. (2001) views that the social-environmental context has a bearing on how the human interrelations are spread out amongst the interacting organizational members, organizational artefacts and the organizational environment.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The first part of the discussion discusses the findings and gives interpretations according to the emergent themes of the data analysis which are all constitutive of distributed leadership theory. The SME under study PSL is an organization in which as per Lakomski

(2005) has the context of distributed leadership portrayed as embodying all features that frame the institution as a whole outfit.

THEME ONE: ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE

The case study findings of PSL reveal a matrix structural organization that depicts a structural adaptation to the enterprise's work attainment strategy. This explicitly exposes how even though the intent of Zambian entrepreneurs in forming SMEs is for the main objective of profit-making (Nuwagaba, 2015) they are obliged to adopt practices for their manpower that enables them to strategically align their work practices and management techniques to forms that can cope with the demands on their organization which may entail the formation of diverging organizational structures such as the matrix structure (Thorpe, Gold and Lawler, 2011). This affirms the views of Thorpe, Gold and Lawler (2011) that leadership has evolved to organizational arrangements that function through collective efforts as individuals add their effort to the attainment of a common organizational goal. However, in an analysis of how distributed leadership centres itself in organizational practice, Spillane and Sherer (2004) cite the views of Whittington who in examining institutions emphasizes the rise of particular organizational forms that may domineer over the organization rather than focusing on the leadership practice in that particular organization as not aiding the studies of leadership practice. Organizational structure is shaped by human interactions and therefore just as proposals for organizational structures being part of leadership practice does not entail they determine the manner of practice (Spillane, Halverson and Diamond, 2004) similarly the PSL organizational structure in terms of its leadership practice can be examined as both the channel and product of its members' actions that will determine its resource base and guidelines that govern it.

The formation that the PSL organizational structure displays responses to imperatives for organizations reciprocation to the global trends in business and adaption of organizational redesigns such as leadership that incorporates collective efforts and employees individually contribute towards a commonly held organizational vision (Thorpe, Gold and Lawler, 2011). PSL organizational structure appears to be inclined to these transformations in organizations which include escalating numbers of cross-functional organizational teams, demands for the prompt delivery of services, the proliferation of

information resources and pronounced complexity in task execution (Pearce and Conger, 2003). A disadvantage that PSL is likely to face by these features posed by such kind of an organizational structure is unrecognizable partitions between organizational sections and departments and obscured job responsibilities as a result of tasks being distributed among all organizational members (Tubre and Collins, 2000).

As an organization strives for leadership through collective endeavours it is important to bear in mind that this undertaking can be strengthened by clearly outlined values and sense of purpose (Woods, 2004). An inherent potential for strengthened organizational structure lies in how organizational ideas and values are established and shared for them to precede any moments of task execution by organizational members (Archer, 1995). Bolden and Petrov, G. & Gosling, (2008) cite Spillane's assertions of leadership being extended over an organization's social and situational contexts which in being applied to the PSL enterprise appeals to a consideration of its context to include both human and inanimate facets as being inclusive in the leadership practice system. The evidence points towards PSL employees not being acquainted with the knowledge of the information of organizational identity elements such as mission statements which makes it evident those lines of communication are completely open for the enterprise to have a solid base of commonly held entrepreneurial ideals (Woods *et al.*, 2004). The absence of a clearly defined mission statement or vision that is made known to all employees can hamper efforts by PSL management to have an organization that is countering the developments in globalization through fostering a workforce that works collectively and shares a common vision. The researcher expected this to be a feature of informal organizations as ensuring adherence to visions and missions by employees is a formal managerial role but similar instances were observed in a study of schools conducted by Timperley, (2005) in which she sites non observance of documents with vision statements of various departments by teachers at all the schools. The importance of these organizational identity elements for the organization is that they help in upholding historical-cultural aspects of conditions where leadership practice is taking place and enables members of an organization to understand the processes of their organization (Fitzsimons, James and Denyer, 2011).

Subtheme: Organizational Roles and Responsibilities

The case study findings revealed that roles have been shared amongst the owner-managers and employees. Entrepreneurial teams such as the PSL team are likely to

distribute leadership in a manner that allows for members of the team to take up work they have relevant knowledge on, this facilitates the leadership activity to be in line with identified proficiencies of organizational members and the demands of the prevailing conditions (Ensley, Pearce and Hmieleski, 2006). This principle has influenced how the owner-managers of PSL have used their shared roles to facilitate the running of their enterprise. This resonates with the actuality that shared roles are said to transpire in organizations when the organizational members make the most of each other's capability by relying on one another to perform tasks (Gronn, 2002).

The PSL employees work in a manner that each one is aware of what is expected of them in terms of getting the overall task done. The distributed perspective in terms of roles and responsibilities for the PSL employees can be anchored in the organizational structure if PSL management views it as a receptacle for the leadership activity and not just as something that supplements organizational members in the completion of tasks based on standard practise (Spillane, 2005). The PSL enterprise has the positive effects of role sharing in form of possible role overlap working to its advantage as it promotes efficiency through diminished instances of judgmental errors despite there being chances of unnecessary effort as a result of the overlapping roles (Gronn, 2002). The apparent sharing of roles and responsibilities in PSL amongst all the enterprise members does not substantiate the claims made by Kempster, Cope and Parry, (2010) that the SME setting is typically comprised of employees blending in with owner-managers of a business that is establishing itself who have the propensity to control all decisions and restrict all access of information flows to themselves, as a result, causing employees to regard them as being heroic leaders.

Subtheme: Organizational Systems

The case study findings expose the pivotal interactions between the PSL enterprise members and the enterprise structures as relying on routine and hence framing and dictating the PSL systems. This gives insight into how distributed leadership constructs are determined by procedures in the structure of an organization and this will always be influenced by what is feasible and pertinent to different contexts (Woods *et al.*, 2004). It is of particular interest how the environmental context of PSL influences processes which depict how members of the enterprise handle aspects of their work which count as part of the proactive processes of structure. The incipient structural elements that expend how the PSL enterprise members act either capably or incapably are determined by the PSL

environmental context and as such culture emerges from the systems and kinds of knowledge that are depended on (Archer, 2000: 307). Most of the systems in place for PSL are dictated by an external policy that regulates how work is handled. Bennett and Harvey (2003) recommend examining the cultural context of an organization and taking into consideration the situational factors prevailing in an organization to determine whether distributed leadership is suitable for its context. Woods (2004) advocates that organizations require procedures and inscriptions that is structural and culminating from past actions in the organization for distributed leadership practice to be highly effective. PSL was found to be lacking in having any laid-out procedures that are official and explicitly laid out and hence despite there being some elements of distributed leadership practice it cannot be highly effective without clearly defined structural pathways to show organizational systems.

Subtheme: Organizational Practices

The case study finding of PSL management teams practice of excluding the employees from critical decisions regarding the enterprise also comes to light in the views of Harris (2004) who affirms withholding of particular tasks and decision making processes from employees and reserving them only for top management but insists progressive distributed leadership practice can be attained through involving employees in working together to achieve organizational development. The practices of PSL management strict observance of critical decision making being restricted to the owner-managers could be attributed to the views of Phelps, Adams and Bessant, (2007) who state that in some instances owner-managers may be guided by their aspirations to fortify their business which may, in turn, hamper their ability to embrace shared leadership practice for certain aspects of the business. This particularly points out that distributed leadership is not intended for dislodging the owner-managers from their positions of influence but suggests that distributed leadership practice is realizable within the hierarchy that exists in their enterprise's structural framework. This is in accordance with Fullan (2003) assertions in a distributed leadership study conducted in a school setting that distributed leadership does not call for the displacement of the fundamental role of the School principal as it actually is dependent of the hierarchical organizational framework in order for it to occur effectively. The job of people with formal management roles as heads of organizations is to predominantly ensure that employees make use of their individual capacities in the

execution of tasks in so doing giving their organization footing (Harris and Lambert, 2003) a proposition which can also be for the PSL owner-managers.

With regard to the boundary that is evident in between the PSL working team in form of the owner-managers and the employees, it has to be properly managed in order for the distributed leadership practice of the enterprise to be effective. The importance of this boundary management is for the sustenance of the distinctness of the two groupings and to avoid the formation of explicit demarcations of the barrier between the groups or the opposite effect of being highly permeable (Harris, 2007). However, this boundary management is unlikely to happen in the informal set up of PSL as Harris (2007) alludes to boundary management as a managerial function of monitoring innovative practices within the already existing shared leadership functions.

The case study findings with regard to one of the owner-managers allowing free-flowing communication between himself and the employees in a WhatsApp group is indicative of Gronn (2000) suggestion for changes in organizational structures in terms of diluting strict forms and control as implying distributed leadership and inculcating an atmosphere of participation of employees to achieve full potential of everyone in the organization. This practice by one of the owner-managers of PSL is a recipe for successful leadership and attainment of distributed leadership practice as it shows that he is connected to the employees and is not just sticking to his hierarchical position. Social contexts are fundamental immanent components of human activity and on the basis of activity theory some of the aspects of situations in an organizational activity that become routine activity and shape leadership into correlative relationships such as is prevailing on the PSL enterprise's WhatsApp group (Fitzsimons, James and Denyer, 2011). In PSLs case for demonstrating some form of contribution to distribution to leadership practice, the WhatsApp group by its nature of having information that is shared about orders and as such in some instances the PSL enterprise members who are part of the group use it to refer to any pending orders qualifies it to be a tool as the established routine around it contributes to distributed leadership and highlighting the entrenchment of progression of leadership in contextual organizational activity (Fitzsimons, James and Denyer, 2011). Leaders who distribute leadership are the kind who foster relationships with their employees and know the value that communal processes have on common purpose which can affect organizational development (Harris and Lambert, 2003) The PSL owner-manager displays attempts to associate with the employees and this presents some

discordance with the entrepreneurial context which is portrayed as displaying very little interaction between owner-managers and employees and indicative of influence of prototypical leadership practice on the part of the owner-manager (Kempster, 2006; Kempster, Cope and Parry, 2010). The PSL owner-manager freely interacting with their employees, disputes caution given by Lans *et al.*, (2008) that owner-managers intrinsic engrossment with affairs of their enterprise through the processes they undertake daily combined with employees with low education statuses have the owner-manager-employee relationship threatened by drifting further and further away from each other.

THEME TWO: EMPOWERMENT OF EMPLOYEES

The case study findings point towards some degree of empowerment of PSL employees especially for those working at the Solwezi outlet; this demonstrates the flexibility of PSL management which displays characterization of distributed leadership. Flexibility by management in organizations entails reconfigured powers and alterations of authority for employees (Harris, 2003). This apparent flexibility in the working environment of the PSL employees can be attributed to free spaces that are described as social atmospheres in which observance of hierarchy and adherence to standardized procedures are not mandatory (Woods, 2004). For these free spaces to allow self-actualization in PSL employees, the employees themselves have to be assertive and not be strictly obedient to the functionalities of PSL as an enterprise (Woods *et al.*, 2004). Capacity building of employees to withstand the features of flexible spaces would suggest some amount of strategic planning towards this direction of operation but this is not a common undertaking for organizations (Gronn, 2002) and the likelihood of it occurring in an informal organization like an SME is not likely.

The implications for PSL management to foster distributed leadership practice in their enterprise warrants relinquishing power to their employees which may diminish some of their authority over their employees and as a result render them susceptible due to their loss of control of particular activity (Fitzsimons, James and Denyer, 2011). It is likely that despite the distributed leadership practice manifesting in PSL through their empowerment of their employees this limited control of management over the employees is likely to be exacerbated by the lack of explicit values, codes of conduct and employment contracts as it translates to their employees not being bound to anything. However, the fact that the PSL management attempts to empower their employees is in

discordance with the notion that employees can impinge on owner-managers as may be usual in the SME setting where employees with inadequate leadership experience resulting in them having predetermined romanticized ideas of leadership and always looking to the owner-manager for leadership direction.

Subtheme: Autonomy of Employees

The prevailing degree of autonomy in PSL revealed by the case study findings is evidence of distributed leadership practice as it pertains to how organizational members are allowed or restrained by management from making cardinal decisions regarding organizational matters using their discretion (Woods *et al.*, 2004). This autonomy of PSL employees given to them by management symbolizes their recognition of the inherent constraints of modes of leadership exercised by a single person, hence their inclination towards empowering their employees with autonomy to make decisions (Harris, 2004). (Woods *et al.*, 2004) cite trust being critical in determining the allowable amount of autonomy as arising from their scrutiny of Abzug and Phelp's model, the relationship between the PSL owner-managers does show a semblance of being trust based. This confirms the views held by Lechlar (2001) which illuminate the connection between progressive entrepreneurial teams and occurrences of distributed leadership as being influenced by the concept of trust. However, the assertions of there being prevalent clashes between budding leadership and the context of SMEs as their contexts are predisposed by controlling owner-managers who are non-responsive, rigid and unapproachable (Leitch, McMullan and Harrison, 2009) cannot be substantiated as the PSL contexts portrays employees that have been given freedom to make some decisions by their employers.

Subtheme: Delegation of Authority

PSL management does delegate authority to employees which is indicative of reapportioning of the internal enterprise responsibilities, this is indicative in the manner in which operations of Solwezi PSL branch have been left to the two employees based there. The mere presence of elements of delegated authority in PSL such as a culture of encouraging employees to use their discretion when making decisions and established social interactions with high levels of mutual reliance in the execution of tasks are indicative of distributed leadership practice in PSL.

THEME THREE: CO-PERFORMED ACTIVITY

The case study findings disclose that there is co-performed activity in the undertakings that are meant for service delivery in PSL. This is expected owing to the nature of the team at PSL an entrepreneurial in which everyone in the enterprise is regarded as being part of owner-managers and employees all-inclusive. This is validated by Downing's (2005) views that members of an enterprise rely on their experience and know how based on the existing established methods of the enterprise shape and re-shape what their business involves. This reinforces the actualities of SMEs fostering participative settings that are imbued in the enterprise's systems and practices and configure their entrepreneurial activity and have an impact on the outcomes of this entrepreneurial activity (Kempster, Cope and Parry, 2010).

The functioning of the PSL team is indicative that entrepreneurial teams drive SMEs and the growth and success of their entrepreneurial venture are based on the building and managing of a team to achieve their enterprise goals. This disputes the perception of the glorified hero figure whose sole efforts run an enterprise successfully but instead reflects that successful enterprises are driven by team efforts (Cooney, 2005). Even though co-performance gives rise to the institutionalization of practices (Gronn, 2002) it is worth mentioning that it does not entail that all those who are involved in co-performance are necessarily involved willingly (something noted by Woods *et al.*, 2004).

Subtheme: Collaborative Activity

The findings portray forms of collaborated distribution in PSL which encompasses the stretching of leadership practice of organizational members performing their duties in a shared work area whilst working with each other simultaneously (Woods *et al.*, 2004). The working team of the two PSL Solwezi outlet employees shows collaboration and is symbolic of a formally instituted team. However, the harmony in the correlation of this collaborative team is likely to be affected by complexities of the work activity which may cause tension in the team due to the apprehension this may cause in team members (Gronn, 2000). This was proved to be evident in the collaborative working team of the two PSL Solwezi outlet employees who required interventions from management to resolve their disputes. PSL management demonstrated ability in dealing with the negative reactions of their employees and ensured that they find amicable ways of working together. This supports the claims of Uhl-Bien (2006) that leadership ensues in the

interpersonal underlying forces that are in the organization in cognizance of the organizational context disputing views of leadership being restricted to roles as also being present in the PSL context.

Subtheme: Collective Distribution of Leadership Activity

Findings portray undertakings that are undertaken collectively in PSL and this resonates with the logic that team activity such as the one occurring in the PSL entrepreneurial team adds up to more than the total activity of an individual member of the enterprise (Gronn, 2002). The collective team of owner-managers and employees bestow appropriate sources of power on the employees at the Solwezi outlet (Harris, 2004). Collective distribution entails a team working towards a common goal but working independently, this feature was identified in the PSL entrepreneurial team and is indicative of intuitive working relationships such as the one's Gronn, (2000) alludes to of the working relationship of school heads and heads of working together in an Australian boys boarding school as being intuitive. The functioning collective team of the PSL owner-managers and the employees at the Solwezi outlet are in discord with the notions of unprogressively distributed leadership in SMEs as a result of an owner-manager's inability to identify staff they can seemly share the leadership practice with or an owner-managers limited ability to see any prospective employees in their team.

Subtheme: Coordinated Activity

The findings were indicative of coordinated activity during the work execution of the PSL entrepreneurial team. Factors such as time, place and distance are cited by Gronn, (2002) as being one of the factors that may either facilitate or hinder the 'modus operandi' of work execution in the PSL entrepreneurial team. Observations of the flow of coordinated activity in the PSL entrepreneurial team seemed to occur with very few inconsistencies. This indicates strong working relationships as the PSL entrepreneurial team appears to work conjunctively.

THEME FOUR: TASK DIFFERENTIATION

The case study findings of the prevalence of task differentiation in PSL brought to light the manner in which the overall operations of the enterprise have been strategically organized to appropriately configure the work activity of everyone in the enterprise. (Gronn, 2002) cites efforts in organizations to organize work by dividing labour as having

a dyadic advantage as it brings together task differentiation and integration which will create distributed patterns of leadership. The selected role members through differentiation of tasks in the PSL enterprise gives rise to combined resources and expertise with each member of the role set performing a specialized task which in combination with the other tasks completes the overall task and in turn reducing limits on leadership practice (Harris and Lambert, 2003). This supports claims of boundaries of leadership being opened up when leadership practice is according to specialized skills as organizations have different capabilities spread out amongst their organizational members which when added up creates concerted efforts (Woods *et al.*, 2004).

Subtheme: Task Specialization

Despite the different members of the PSL enterprise taking on different tasks the work environment of PSL is characterized by interdependence. This interdependence arises as an inherent feature of the division of labour and arises where tasks have to be fragmented into meticulous specialist tasks and resulting in the members of the PSL entrepreneurial depending on one another for whole job completion (Gronn, 2000). The PSL enterprise activity displayed reliance on artefacts in form of computer applications, like the Toyota program, that are symbolic of the PSL explicit knowledge base as it serves as a protocol like a tool during the ordering and pricing of spare parts. The symbolism of these artefacts renders them part of leadership practice of organizations and does not place them as being part of the framework for the actions of organizational members (Bennett and Harvey, 2003). Even though every member of the PSL enterprise is expected to know how to use the Toyota program, it is used in the specialized roles of owner-manager three and the employees at the Solwezi outlet branch which is in line with the notion that requirements of use of artefacts in organizations demand alternate ones for alternate task undertaking if they are to be declared as being valuable (Woods *et al.*, 2004) as they have a double-acting effect of either disabling or enabling leadership practice (Spillane, 2005). The specialized use of the Toyota program by the PSL owner-manager three and the employees from Solwezi outlet branch gives it a boundary-spanning functionality.

Task differentiation is a fundamental factor at play in the activity of an organization as it facilitates the distribution of leadership in organizations (Gronn, 2000). The PSL management subdivided tasks that are suited their enterprise's context, but the structural elements of value, authority and personality of enterprise members determine the form of the distributed leadership that will emerge from their managerial actions.

ANSWERS TO THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS

How do notions of distributed leadership actually occur in the leadership landscape of the case organisation (Prompt Spares Limited, a Zambian SME)?

The distributed leadership that is evident in PSL enterprise is influenced by an impetus to instil forms of independence in the PSL employees that entail use of discretion in their individual decision-making processes. This could justify why the distributed leadership semblance practices identified in the PSL enterprise appeared to be holistic as all actions in the PSL task arena are calculated (Gronn 2003). This validates the claims by (Woods *et al.*, 2004) there cannot be a universal model for distributed leadership as each organizational structure will have a distributed leadership construct that is suited to its context. The PSL enterprise displays all of (Gronn, 2002) three distinct forms in which leadership can be distributed amongst a working pair or group: Spontaneous collaboration; intuitive working relations; and institutionalized practice.

The emerging model of distributed leadership is one that appears to have a focus on shared roles and empowerment of employees but with restrictions as the three owner-managers of distributed leadership have unknowingly been implementing distributed leadership practice through their recognition of empowering their employees to lead. These PSL owner-managers' actions have led to PSL enterprise displaying a strategic initiative by management to foster a team that works together and can take full advantage of each team member's strengths and capabilities. This confirms the perspective of SMEs having an upper hand over their large establishment competitors as they have the ability to adjust their operations to meet the needs of market conditions which enables them to endure any adverse conditions because of their adjustable work contexts (Abor and Quartey, 2010)

The context of PSL in terms of distributed leadership practice is dictated by the meanings that the entire entrepreneurial team attaches to the work they do as individuals and hence the external environment conditions stipulate most of the individual activity that is dependent on the situation in which it is being performed which confirms Spillane John B.; Walker, Lisa J.; Loyiso, Jita, (2001) views that organizational context is more than just a platform meant for employee performances. However, there appears to be a focus on participative learning in the PSL context of work, as the employees rely on either an owner-manager or an experienced employee to perform their tasks as they are no laid out procedures to be followed. The PSL entrepreneurial team relies on networked electronic

communications technology in performing their co performed work between the two PSL sites to facilitate their distributed work activity.

The PSL structure does display the following elements of distributed leadership as per Woods' (2004) portrayal of distributed leadership elements.

Institutional: Distributed leadership appears to be present in the organizational structure which has participative elements and empowered employees. The PSL management has ensured that the organizational structure despite having distributed leadership traits maintains the authoritative overall figure head of the owner-managers. This PSL organizational structure avoids the likelihood of possible resultant obscuring of distinguishing between the employers and employees which must be portrayed to show coexistence in distributed leadership organizational structure (Woods *et al.*, 2004)

Cultural: Distributed leadership is apparent in the use of systems and knowledge that the PSL enterprise depends on for its operations.

Social: Distributed leadership is prevalent in the social interactions of the PSL enterprise and the interactions between enterprise members displays an atmosphere trust.

The PSL boundaries of leadership have been extended in the manner in which employees are empowered and acknowledged by their employers as encompassing of more people into leadership by employers is indicative of distributed leadership in action (Harris, 2004)

Which dimensions of distributed leadership manifest in the Zambian SME context?

Various dimension of distributed leadership could be observed in the case organisation. Among the possible dimensions theorised in the literature, summarised in Table 5, examples could be seen that fit all of them.

Table 3. 1; PSL Distributed Leadership Practice Dimensions

Kind Of DL	DL Author	DL Dimension
Normative	Harris (2006)	Representational
Normative	Harris (2006)	Illustrative
Holistic	Gronn (2002), Leithwood <i>et al.</i> , (2008)	Planful Alignment

If viewed from a normative angle the distributed leadership dimensions of the PSL enterprise in line with Harris (2006) normative dimensions falls within the representational and illustrative dimensions. A holistic view of distributed leadership in the PSL enterprise displays a planful alignment dimension (Leithwood et al., 2008).

On the basis of the framework given by (Thorpe, Gold and Lawler, 2011) in an effort to establish the views held by Leithwood et al. and Iles and Feng in determining the dimensional view of distributed leadership in PSL taking into full acknowledgement of the context of PSL and the purpose of the leadership activity identified as making up its distributed leadership practice, the distributed leadership quadrant is Aligned/Emergent.

How might these emergent dimensions of distributed leadership impact the leadership landscape of the SME?

Planful alignment features as a focus of leadership activity in the PSL enterprise and instilled feelings of trust by followers in their leaders. The PSL enterprise being in the planful alignment dimension does not automatically translate to absolute efficient operations in the organisation. As noted by Leithwood *et al.* (2008), some of the planned work output may turn out to be ineffective as some team players may not perform their tasks with the skill it requires.

However, for the full benefits of planful alignment in terms of shared values and ideas to be realized by the management team of PSL enterprise they need to ensure that they handle a weakness that was identified in their leadership which overlooks a critical ingredient of good leadership which is developing shared understandings about their enterprise in their entrepreneurial team (Leithwood *et al.*, 2008).

The PSL enterprise business environment was identified by one of its owner-managers as one that is highly unstable in terms of client interactions and therefore modes of work change unexpectedly. The varying forms of leadership apparent in the PSL organizational structure are indicative that both blended leadership practice where both distributed leadership and hierarchical centred leadership are exercised and makeup the management style of the three owner-managers. The evident dependence of work activity on successive actions for the full execution of the enterprise's major tasks and the prevailing atmosphere of mutual trust amongst members of the entrepreneurial team is symbolizes efficiencies in the operations of PSL. The strict view of traditional hierarchy being the best form of management in PSL is non-existent. These views brought out the socially

constructed perspectives of the PSL enterprise that fit in the bottom left quadrant of our analytic framework, i.e. Aligned/Emergent.

CONCLUSION

This chapter presented the discussion of the findings for the case study with the interpretations. The findings show some discordance with the views held by other authors on distributed leadership, but it is not clear that these are the result of the SME context. It was argued that the visible hybrid form of leadership practiced by owner-managers in the PSL enterprise is due to the inclination of owner-managers to keep some strict control of the functions of management to themselves in an attempt to keep the major issues of their enterprise to themselves, whilst at the same time they have to rely on aspects of distributed leadership in day-to-day operation of the dual site organisation.

CHAPTER SIX

The aim of this chapter is to bring this study to a conclusion. The chapter provides a summary of the whole study and will in this regard give summaries of the individual chapters portraying how they contributed to the overall organisation of the thesis. The recommendations will be presented as conclusory remarks and are given as arising from inadequacies revealed in the findings of the study.

SUMMARY OF STUDY

Chapter one of the study gives a disposition of the study and introduces its focus, the concept of distributed leadership. The chapter presents the single case study site, Prompt Spares Limited, which was analysed in its capacity as an informal Zambian organization and a Small and Medium Enterprise. The chapter lays out the general objective of the study as attempting to explore the manifestation of distributed leadership practice in SMEs with specific reference to the case of a Zambian SME. The chapter gives an introductory view on the distributed leadership practices in SMEs. A justification for the study is given in this chapter and recognition to the fact that the concept of distributed leadership is largely restricted to the field of school administration. The purpose of the study as given by this chapter resonates the fact in spite of the various forms of distributed leadership being focused on the educational sector, the concept can still be observed in other sectors such as the entrepreneurial sector as has been done for this study. The chapter denotes the theoretical framework for the study to two authors – Gronn and Spillane, who both have different, but complimentary theoretical orientations to the concept of distributed leadership.

Chapter two provides a literature review of the concept of distributed leadership with the overarching aim of providing a derived meaning of the concept of distributed leadership in organizational leadership studies. The chapter gives its focus as being; illustration of the perceived benefits of distributing organizational leadership and exploration of the extent to which dimensions of distributed leadership can be identified in SMEs. In this vein, the chapter introduction is a synopsis of the explicit conceptualizations of distributed leadership practice that are likely to be applicable to the context of an SME. The review is delivered in a thematic approach for the discussion of the concept of distributed leadership in an informal organization – an SME. The thematic discussion areas that were discussed are outlined below:

- the dimensions of distributed leadership;
- the prominence of the distributed leadership concept;
- the contextualization of distributed leadership within an SME environment
- the anticipated challenges of distributed leadership application in such an environment.

The chapter is concluded with the highlighting of a general view of the need for more research on the concept of distributed leadership that is currently available as opposed to the trend of having discussions on autonomous writings on distributed leadership by proponent authors.

Chapter three outlines the methodological approaches and research design that were applied in this study as a to explore the leadership activity of PSL owner-managers and employees in terms of how they relate with one another within the environmental context of their enterprise. The chapter demonstrates how the qualitative study's research design was apportioned in to the following sections:

- **rationale for a qualitative case study** - the study was conducted on a small scale and used a single case for the study, and in order to have a holistic and empirical enquiry of the distributed leadership concept within the bounds of the SME, the study had to be qualitative.
- **paradigmatic location** – the research paradigm for this study was the constructivist / interpretive research paradigm as it enabled the researcher to seek explanations on the nature of the leadership landscape of the SME under investigation
- **research methodology approach** - the researcher opted for the qualitative methodology as it is holistic, interpretive, naturalistic, and contextual as it aims at finding revelations of the uniqueness of the case under study. The chosen methodology also helped the researcher get a representative depiction of the concept under study from the data gathered during the data collection process.
- **case study participant selection** – the researcher opted to use convenience sampling for the selection of the study participant selection,
- **instrumentation** – a self-designed interview guide was the primary instrument for data collection and was administered only to the owner managers of the SME.
- **research questions** - the study sought to answer the following questions:

1. What notions of distributed leadership actually occur in the leadership landscape of a Zambian SME?
 2. How do the dimensions of distributed leadership manifest in the Zambian SME context?
 3. How do emergent dimensions of distributed leadership affect the leadership landscape of the organization?
- **collection of data** – data for the study was collected through: interviews, focus group discussions, analysis of site documents, and field notes,
 - **analysis of data** – this process followed three concurrent steps
 - I. organization of the data
 - II. reviewing the data and the observational notes
 - III. categorizing of themes that arose during the analysis
 - **limitations** – these were identified as follows:
 - I. the researcher only studied one SME
 - II. one of the three owner-managers declined to participate in the study
 - III. employee participation took place in a group and perhaps some participants with longer experience and more dominant personalities dominated the discussion.
 - IV. the period for the data collection may also not have been very adequate to cover various aspects that may have arisen during a longer time of engagement
 - **transferability of findings** - the researcher relied on validation techniques that have been cited as being suited for validation where a researcher employs the constructivist/interpretive paradigm
 - **ethical considerations** - the researcher; sought permission from the information custodians- owners of PSL, was granted ethical clearance to conduct the research by Stellenbosch University REC

Chapter four gives insight in to how the data analysis findings provided a contextual depiction of the leadership activity of the SME under study. The chapter reveals the themes with their subthemes that are as a result of the data analysis and denote distributed leadership symptomatic terms and form part of the distributed leadership empirical base.

These themes can be cited as factors that can be employed to elucidate the emanating instances displaying traits of distributed leadership practice in the SME setting.

The themes that emerged from the data analysis are listed below with their subthemes:

Theme one: Organisational Structure

- Subtheme: Organizational Roles and Responsibilities
- Subtheme: Organizational Systems
- Subtheme: Organizational Practices

Theme two: Empowerment of Employees

- Subtheme: Autonomy of Employees
- Subtheme: Delegation of authority

Theme three: Co-performed Activity

- Subtheme: Collaborative activity
- Subtheme: Collective Distribution of Leadership Activity
- Subtheme: Coordinated Activity

Theme four: Task Differentiation

- Subtheme: Task Specialization

Chapter five presents the discussion for the findings of the study. The introductory statement of the chapter points out that the distributed leadership practices observations for PSL followed the structure provided by the emergent themes and were further informed by the activity theory insights on how it highlights divisions of leadership labour in the organisation. The chapter informs that the case study research revealed that the leadership landscape of PSL is a hybrid configuration of distributed and vertical forms of leadership and this entails that although its leadership landscape displays distributed leadership practices by necessity owing to its size and geographical distribution, its owner-managers try to maintain vertical control in significant areas of their business operations.

RECOMMENDATIONS

These recommendations are given with the insight provided by Bennet et al. (2003) who propose approaching issues of distributed leadership as an outlook on leadership and not necessarily as a leadership technique.

The findings substantiate claims that entrepreneurial leadership works best using both distributed and vertical leadership. Frameworks on gauging how much impact the distributed activity identified in SMEs has on enterprises achieving their entrepreneurial goals.

The findings are indicative of a limited evidence base which portray the different nature of the multiple actors involved in distributed leadership activity of SMEs and as such depictions of these have to be adapted from the school contexts where there has been extensive distributed leadership research. This calls for more research on distributed leadership to be conducted in SME setups.

The theoretical focus of this study was based on theorizations on the Activity theory hence the analysis was on the structure in relation to the agency in organizations with little or no issues on the concept of cognition. On the basis of Leithwood *et al.*, (2008) assertions that formulations of distributed cognition are reinforced by unrestrained distributed leadership practice, a study on distributed leadership practice in SMEs with a focus on distributed cognition should be undertaken to show its effect on the success of SMEs given that the SME environment constrains full manifestation of distributed leadership due to the propensity of owner-managers to maintain control of their establishments.

CONCLUSION

The case study research evidence of the PSL enterprise suggests success which can be attributed to the unconsciously employed distributed leadership mechanisms by the owner-managers in the operations of their enterprise. The important beneficial elements of distributed leadership for the PSL enterprise is evident in the entrepreneurial team set up of the PSL venture which has proved to promote stability in their operations. Visible success of PSL as an enterprise can be attributed to the team efforts of their entrepreneurial team which rely on the interdependency that is evident in their various role sets. The degree of trust in the PSL environment, though moderate, contributed to the constitution of a performing entrepreneurial team which in turn influenced the

emergence of distributed forms of leadership practice. Long term institutional distributed leadership has been formalized in the PSL enterprise by the owner-managers through the authority given to their team of employees working from their PSL outlet.

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APPENDICES

Interview Guide

PROMPT SPARES OWNER-MANAGER'S INTERVIEW GUIDE

This interview guide is intended to collect data on the topic: *Distributed Leadership as a Unit of Analysis in a Zambian SME*. The data collected by the researcher will be used purely for academic purposes towards the fulfilment of requirements for her Master of Philosophy in Information and Knowledge Management.

You have been selected by virtue of you being an owner-manager of Prompt Spares Limited. I guarantee you that you are assured of anonymity, and whatever information you furnish will be treated with utmost confidentiality and will be used for the sole purpose of qualitative data analysis and interpretation of results in this academic research.

The purpose of this study is to examine Distributed Leadership (DL) the chosen form of leadership for this study. distributed leadership brings to the fore a form of leadership that prompts managers to shift from leading in authoritarian modes to leading in more democratic modes (Woods *et al.*, 2004). Gronn (2000) depicts two forms of distributed leadership practice that is depicted in numerical action and concerted action on which he bases his argument that organizations are made up of different individuals with different expertise. In instances where activities that are vital to organizational operations are executed by knowledgeable employees who depend on collaboration with other employees and correlative relations (Jones *et al.*, 2007) this symbolizes some form of distributed leadership practice practice. The concept of an entrepreneurial team such as yours, is seemly a fitting setting to undertake an analysis of distributed leadership indications in SMEs (Kempster, Cope and Parry, 2010)

This study explores the concept of distributed leadership practice and its applicability in the management of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs), taking a Zambian SME- Prompt Spares LTD as the organization for in depth investigation of this Case Study. It is therefore hoped that this study will highlight any features of distributed leadership that may exist in an indigenous Zambian SME, Prompt Spares Limited.

This interview should not take longer than an hour and I would like to inform you that it will be tape recorded. Please feel free ask questions for any clarity you may feel you need.

SECTION A: Demographic Information of Respondents

1. Gender

Male[]

Female[]

2. Age (indicate your age range)

20-25 years[]

26-35 years[]

36-45 years[]

above 45 years[]

3. What is your highest educational qualification?

4. Have you engaged in any formal training on business management?

SECTION B: Organizational Structure/Practice

5. How would you describe your enterprise's structure?

Hierarchical (arranged in order of rank)

Heterarchical (each person is equal in rank)

6. Does your enterprise have any of the following?

Mission statement

Vision statement

Policy Documents

Procedure Manuals

7. If anyone of the above exists in your enterprise, what format it is it kept in and is it readily accessible to all employees?

8. What information resource in your enterprise is cardinal for the continued existence of your enterprise?

9. How do you ensure that your employees understand these cited information resources that are cardinal for continued existence of your business enterprise?

10. Is it clear which owner-manager is accountable for ensuring that the information resource you have cited as being cardinal to the business enterprise is shared with all employees?

11. How are decisions made within your enterprise (daily operations, budget) is there a full consultative process involving all members of the enterprise regardless of their position?

SECTION C: Organizational Leadership

12. What major tasks in your business enterprise are reserved for defined and designated leaders?

13. Are there any employment contracts for your employees that are tied to positions of leadership?

14. Do you allow employees to use their discretion when they need to make a decision during the course of their work activity or do you insist that they contact you before making a decision?

15. Are there any circumstances can any employee in the enterprise perform a leadership function or do you feel only the directors must perform leadership functions?

16. How often do you delegate tasks to your employees?

SECTION D: General Overarching Principles of Distributed Leadership

Division of labor

17. How are the day to day routine tasks for your enterprise divided into smaller tasks amongst your entrepreneurial team?

18. Where tasks are divided amongst members of the entrepreneurial team, how do you ensure that each person fulfils their smaller part of the overall task to be performed?

19. What forms of task specialization (task specialization arises when work has to be reorganized due to changes that may be necessitated by technological advancements/upgrades or new regulations in the sector) emerge when carrying out the enterprise's activity?

20. What skills (e.g. technological capability) are required for this task specialization that emerges when carrying out the enterprise's activity?

21. How do external factors (sector regulations, statutory regulations) affect the division of duties for members of your entrepreneurial team?

Distributed Leadership as Concerted Action

22. How is any work that requires collaborative efforts of more than one person in your enterprise organized?

Spontaneous collaboration

23.1 In instances where work is handled collaboratively, which members of the enterprise are regarded as being part of the collaborative working team?

23.2 How would you describe the instances that necessitate collaborative efforts?

Intuitive working relations

24.1 How would you describe roles in your enterprise that rely on shared roles (Shared roles arise in instances when enterprise members capitalize on their skills and rely on each other to cover up for each other's skill gaps) which require formation of a strategic partnership in a focal section for its effective execution?

24.2 How do you instill feelings of social unity and purpose (a sense of belonging and feeling part of the enterprise) in your employees during collaborative work in the execution of tasks?

Institutionalized practices

25.1 What work procedures have been formalized through documentation of process steps to be followed?

25.2 What structures have you put in place to ensure everyone follows laid out steps each time they are performing duties that require procedural steps to be followed?

25.3 What work procedures have been adapted as a result of their routine nature in the activity of the enterprise?

Distributed Leadership as Numerical Action

26. How would you describe instances where you would say each and every person in the enterprise regardless of their level gets to perform a leadership task?

27. How do you define how each member of the enterprise from their position represents the whole systematic functioning of the entire enterprise?